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A NOVEL.

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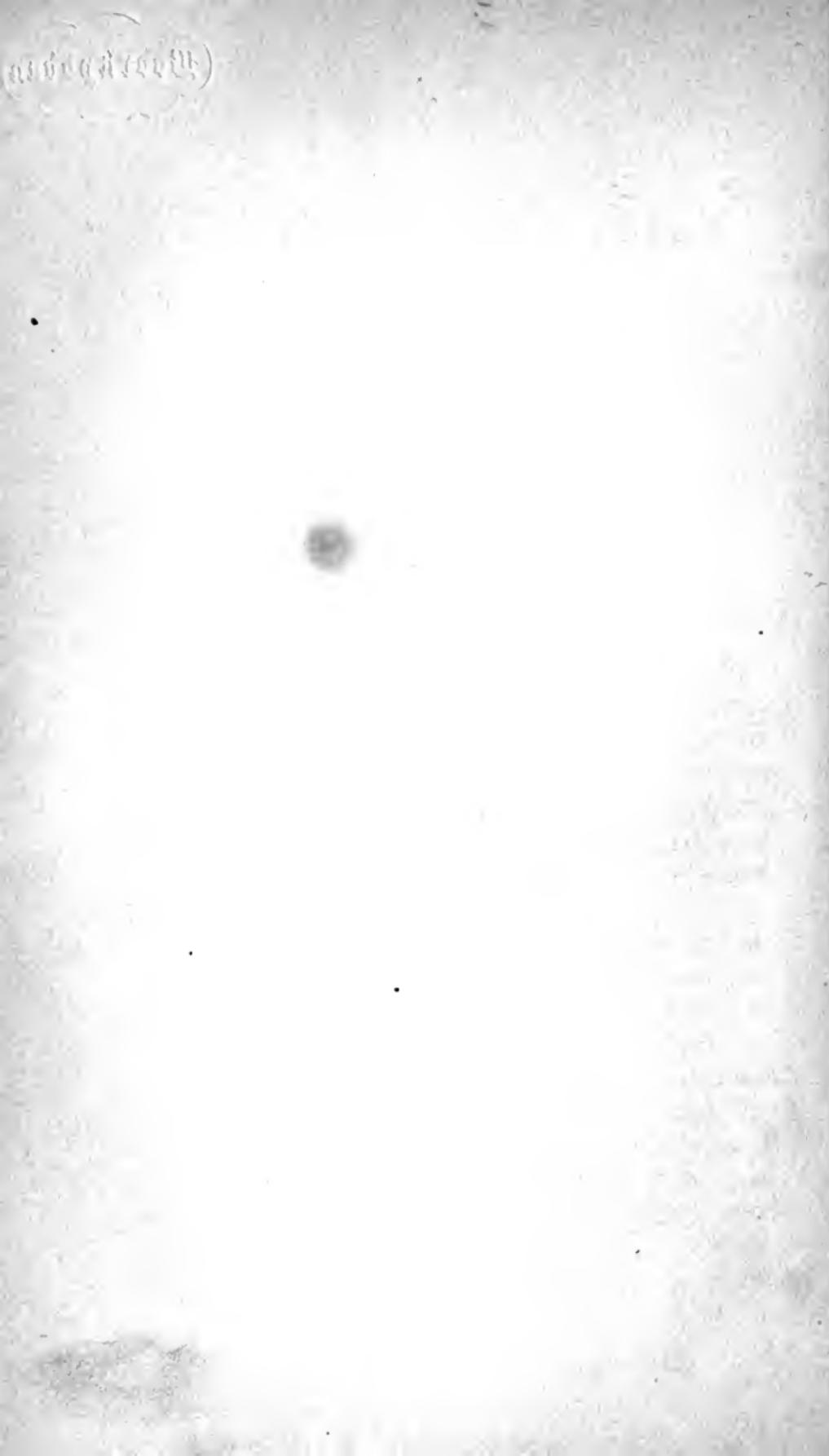
“One woman is fair; yet I am well: another is wise; yet I am well: another virtuous; yet I am well: but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace.”

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THE BARONET.

CHAPTER I.

“ My dearest Louise, you cannot possibly be serious ?”

“ I know it my dear, therefore I never try ; but, without being serious, Emily ; indeed, with all imaginable gaiety, I intend to carry this design into execution. It will, at least, afford me some amusement, if it has no other good effect.”

“ And suppose your papa, or your brother, should discover that you had acted so imprudently, and that I had assisted you, what would they think of us both ? I tremble for the consequences.”

“ Oh ! they would be very terrible I dare say — nothing less than imprisonment for life ; or perhaps ‘ off with our heads, so much for Louise and Emily ;’ but to be serious, which is rather a difficult task for me ; with regard to Lionel, I do not believe he is any better than other people ; and I am pretty sure he would not scruple to laugh at things equally alarming, so I am not at all afraid of him ; and, as

to my papa, he is so very excellent an old gentleman, that I should be quite *au desespoir* to distress him in the least; so, in order to save him from any uneasiness, I shall take especial care to keep this dreadfully imprudent action an inviolable secret; and I hope you will allow my consideration in this particular to be a remarkable instance of dutiful affection."

Emily smiled, and Louise continued:

"And for anything wrong in the act itself, I am sure I shall stand excused in the eyes of the world. Now, only take into consideration my melancholy case; — here am I, almost nineteen years of age, daughter of a peer of the realm, with a large fortune, a pretty face (excuse vanity), and all the world at my feet, except the very individual I should like to see there; and with his ridiculous notions, how is it possible I shall ever bring him to it, unless I go a little out of the right road?"

"That is where we differ; in my opinion, the right road is always the safest path to pursue."

"Oh! no doubt it is most interesting and delightful travelling in a general way; but if you have an inclination to meet some irregular person, who is journeying in a different direction, what is to be done?"

"They who journey in a different direction are, perhaps, better avoided."

"Morally charming! my dear — worthy of Mrs. Pennington, or the illustrious Doctor Gregory. What a capital duenna you would make! it is a pity you are not old and ugly, with wrinkles instead of dimples, and a voice that might claim affinity with the dulcet tones of a raven."

“ There again we differ in opinion,” said Emily laughing ; “ but indeed I wish I could persuade you to give up this romantic idea.”

“ You must try your persuasive power on those who are less obstinately bent on doing as they please, right or wrong : in short, Emily, I am resolved either to marry Sir Charles Freemantle, of Myrtlewood Hall, in the county of Derbyshire, baronet, or annuallize into a little old maid, like Miss Moreland, and become ‘ Aunty to Lionel’s children.’ ”

Emily laughed heartily.—“ And so you have really formed this most unaccountable resolution, from seeing this young gentleman once, and once only, in a crowded ball-room, without any possibility of knowing any thing of his talents, worth, or character ? ”

“ The very head and front of my offending hath this extent, no more,” repeated the giddy girl, in a tone of mock tragedy ; “ but really, Emily, you must give me credit for more exalted, and less every-day sort of sentiments, than to surrender my most valuable and *récherché* heart to a man *au premier coup d’œil*, merely because he has white teeth and arched eyebrows. No ! I am not in love at present ; but I will do my best endeavour to fashion him to my own taste, and if I achieve this mighty work, I shall bestow upon him my undivided affections. In this grand undertaking I stand forth as the championess of my sex, to clear its fame from the aspersions cast upon it by this very arch-browed youth. Have we not received information from various quarters, of the strange whims and fancies this over-nice gentleman has promul-

gated as his creed, respecting the numerous faults and follies of womankind ? I suppose he considers himself as a being whose *like* we ne'er shall look upon again, nor e'er existed upon earth before ; for the women were always, I doubt not, exactly such as they are in the present age, with the same imperfections on their heads ; and the men have been very well satisfied with them, from the days of Adam until now, when Sir Charles Freemantle, baronet, has, with more than his due quantity of presumption, taken upon himself to accuse us poor feminines of more failings than fall to our share. Without putting his gallantry too strongly to the test, I should like to compel him to own, that women have better attributes than vanity, coquetry, and an inordinate love of notoriety, which, he is pleased to maintain, are their ruling passions, to the entire exclusion of all better feelings.

“ His bad opinion of our sex is a hopeful foundation for you to build your affection upon.”

“ Rather contrary to the rules of architecture, I allow ; for the more the foundation is shaken, the firmer will be the fabric. But you are quite wrong in supposing I have an affection for the biped ; — there is a little grain of pique in this affair, as well as a trifling degree of admiration. He fancies himself invincible, and for that reason alone would I conquer him ; so, now the point is sufficiently discussed, we will, if you please, commence an attack upon the enemy ; how shall I begin ? Come ! give your scruples to the winds, and help me to compose this letter.”

“ You will do it much better without my assistance,” said Emily.”

“How particularly modest, my dear ; but as every body knows that two heads are infinitely superior to one, I shall be much indebted to you for one or two of your ideas.”

“ You will, I suppose, begin by saying you are aware of the indelicacy and impropriety of the step — ”

“ Pshaw !” interrupted Louise, “ what nonsense you talk ! — indelicacy and impropriety ! Good heavens ! when I wish to impress the man with an opinion that I am a very first-rate specimen of the female race ; to set out by telling him that I am indelicate and improper ! can any thing be more ridiculous ? There — go on with your drawing, for I begin to perceive that you are not likely to afford me much assistance on the present occasion.”

Emily quietly sat down to her half-finished landscape, and the lively Louise, in a few moments, had written the following lines :

“ To Sir Charles Freemantle, Bart.

“ If you have not too much pride, or obstinacy, to acknowledge your errors, I do not despair of convincing you that women are not all heartless coquets, beings made-up of vanity, folly, and all the thousand other excellent qualities you are pleased to endow them with : they are a compound, I allow ; but the materials of which they are composed, are quite different from those you think proper to mention. I know it is a difficult thing to overcome absurd prejudices, but you may consider the attempt as a proof that I think you worth the trouble of making it. If you are willing to be lectured into a reasonable being, I beg you will give notice to that effect in the ‘ Morning Post.’ ”

“ *Le voilà, le coup de guerre !* this certainly will have some effect.”

“ Some effect doubtless it will have ; but not that which you anticipate.”

“ Why not ? Do you think I shall meet with some terrible judgment for this atrocity ?”

“ No — but I think he will either take no notice of it at all, or such notice as will not please you.”

“ Then I am very much mistaken in the man : if my opinion is correct, there will be an answer in less than three days ; if, however, that space of time should elapse without an intimation, on his part, that he wishes to continue the correspondence, then I will candidly confess that I have no discernment in character. So now, my pretty little gravity, leave off drawing, for it is time to dress for the park.”

Louise was the daughter of Lord Bransby, a nobleman, who had risen to high rank and fortune, from a station somewhat above mediocrity, but by no means approaching to affluence. Being the younger son of a distant branch of the Bransby family, he was educated for the church, where he would in all probability have attained to a high degree of preferment, through the interest of his noble relatives, had he not most unexpectedly succeeded to his present title, by the deaths of the intermediate heirs.

He had married rather late in life, and had the misfortune to lose an amiable and beloved wife while his children were yet in their infancy ; a loss by which a gloom was cast over his future life, no subsequent gleams of prosperity had the power to

dissipate ; nor could he even find a solace for the deprivation of so dear a companion in the smiles of his beautiful offspring, the elder a boy just five years of age, and the infant Louise, whose birth had cost the life of her mother.

Lord Bransby was naturally a man of retiring manners and profound study ; and the accession of a title, at the advanced age of forty-five, was not likely to produce any material change in his disposition and habits of life.

At the time of this important alteration in his circumstances and future prospects, Lionel was a fine, handsome, spirited boy, about eight years of age, and was sent to that celebrated Greek and Latin dépôt, Eton School, where he went through the regular routine, including all the various châtisements attendant upon sundry misdemeanours, with great éclat. At sixteen he was removed to Oxford, where the roughness of the schoolboy gradually wore off ; and he returned home with manners more adapted to the polite air of Grosvenor-square, than were wont to accompany him from the ruder climate of Eton and its environs.

His sister was highly delighted with the elegant, fashionable young man who now made his appearance, instead of the tall, boisterous youth, whose loud voice and ungraceful gait she frequently had occasion to complain of, to his very great annoyance, and proportionably small improvement.

Louise, instructed at home in all the fashionable accomplishments of the day, by the most eminent masters, made such proficiency as young ladies generally do, who take a lesson as a patient does

his prescription, not because they like it, but because they are told it is to do them good.

She was very pretty, and really amiable, but gay, volatile, and thoughtless, to a degree that led her into a thousand errors; and these faults were rendered more conspicuous, by being contrasted with the gentle and rather serious temper of her cousin Emily, an orphan, brought up with much tenderness by Lord Bransby, on whose bounty she was entirely dependent.

This young lady was very handsome, and bore a striking resemblance to Louise, but her beauty was of a more pensive cast; perhaps the different nature of their feelings might influence the expression of their features. The one, in possession of all the advantages of high rank and splendid fortune, felt that she was an object of attraction and envy; her hand was sought by men of the first distinction; her smile, her frown, were matters of consequence: and, let people say what they will, there is a certain satisfaction resulting from the consciousness of our own importance, which gives an elasticity to the spirits, and throws an air of easy gaiety over every word and action, that is irresistibly fascinating, and can never be imitated with success by the second-rate performers on this extensive theatre. Emily, on the contrary, though bred up in luxury, and with as much indulgence as her kind guardian could have bestowed on a second daughter, knew that she had no real title to the place she held in society; and although her own attractions and her uncle's protection secured to her a high degree of consideration among the circle in which she moved, there is a wide difference between the feel-

ings that are excited by attention, when it is a condescension, and those we experience on receiving the homage that is due to the station we occupy in society.

Perhaps, if their relative situations had been changed, their characters, also, would have undergone a similar transformation; for disposition is, undoubtedly, more the effect of circumstances than of nature; and, that this is the case, may be proved by the common occurrences of every day, which certainly ought to have more weight than mere theoretical arguments on the opposite side of the question.

CHAPTER II.

“ *London, May, 15.*

“ Sir Charles Freemantle, to Major Dufforth.

“ DEAR DUFFORTH,

“ IF you do not speedily return to town, to talk me into what you would call a reasonable mood, I shall quickly take flight to my native hills and dales, and hermitize among the woods and waterfalls of Myrtlewood for the remainder of my life.

“ I am more than ever disgusted with London, its fopperies and follies; its empty-headed coxcombs, and insufferable coquettes. There is nothing to satisfy a soul possessed of any sentiment and feeling. You say I refine away all my happiness; but I would not exchange my, perhaps, over nicety, for the coarser feelings, that can be pleased with the scenes of confusion, with which they who mix more with the world are perpetually surrounded.

“ I went to Lady Thornton’s ball on Friday; the crowd was immense, the heat intolerable; in fact, it was detestable altogether. I forswear, for the

future, all balls and routs ; at least so long as I retain possession of my senses. I again met that pretty Miss Bransby, and was coxcomb enough to imagine she looked at me with some little curiosity ; but in this, as in everything else, I was deceived ; for, on asking her to dance, she scarcely deigned a reply, and, immediately after, I saw her waltzing with that conceited fool the Duke of Belltown ; but then he is a *duke* ; a word of magnetic power over a woman's mind, when choosing a partner, either for a waltz or a wedding. I own it annoyed me a little ; but do not suppose it was this circumstance that put me out of humour with everything else. I recollect admiring that same lovely girl at the Opera one night — I think you were with me. I thought I saw something in her countenance that indicated less *ruse de cœur* than we generally meet with, and, with this idea, I kept my eye upon her all the evening ; but I am sorry to say, this proceeding of mine, far from leading to a satisfactory result, only served to remind me incessantly of your own observation, that, ' if you wish to think well of a woman, you must not watch her too narrowly.' It was the old story ; flirting with every fop that is skilled in *la science des riens*, and distributing smiles according to the rank of the flatterers. Oh ! Dufforth, I do not believe there is a woman in the world, capable of feeling a real disinterested affection. Vanity is the main-spring of every thought, word, and action ; a trifling, superficial, glittering race, whose principal object is to outshine each other ; husband, children, friends, and even fame, are all sacrificed to this unworthy ambition ; and the very beings that were created

to give a charm to the existence of man, embitter that existence, and, alas ! too often plunge him into ruin and disgrace.

“ I feel it is in vain to seek a wife, such as my imagination has pictured, in an exalted sphere ; yet, in the humbler walks of life, there is a want of refinement that disappoints my heart. But I forget that you will laugh at my romance, therefore I will change the subject.

“ In short, Dufforth, I shall be heartily glad to quit London ; and once again under the branches of our well-known oak, indulge in dreams of bliss that never can be realized. But even Myrtlewood is not the happy home it was formerly, when you and I and Talbot climbed the peak together, or sat over our claret, in the old hall, planning schemes for the future, that have all vanished into empty air. Poor Talbot ! I wonder what is become of him ! I went to the Opera last night, but was so annoyed with the impertinence of people who thought proper to be surprised and delighted at seeing me there, that I was driven away before the end of the second act.

“ Is it not unpleasant that a man can’t go into a theatre without being wondered at, as if he had dropped from the moon ? I suppose you will say this is my own fault, for not showing myself more frequently ; but I am fond of walking about at my ease ; and hate to squeeze myself in wherever there happens to be a crowd. What an unnatural state of existence it is, to be perpetually pushing through a mass of people, with scarcely room to breathe ? One would think the

world was not large enough to accommodate its numerous inhabitants, when we see so many persons pressing into one small space, looking as if they derived anything but pleasure from their close vicinity.

“ I shall now conclude, having, I suppose, exhausted your patience ; let me hear by the next post when you intend to return,—and for heaven’s sake ! let it be soon. Adieu, for the present.

“ Your’s, truly,
“ CHARLES FREEMANTLE.”

“ Poor Charles !” exclaimed the major, folding up the letter, “ what an ingenious fellow he is in the art of self-tormenting ; he is the most unhappy dog in the universe, without one earthly cause ; and talks as if he had been first created, and then all the rest of the world made on purpose to annoy him. I do believe he would ride twenty miles in search of a misery, if there was not one to be had nearer : however, I must go to town, and see what I can do with him.” And on the third day after this, Sir Charles Freemantle and Major Dufforth were breakfasting together, at the Major’s residence in Brook-street.

Major Dufforth was a remarkably elegant man, about six and-thirty ; not handsome, but with all that animation and intelligence of countenance that gives an irresistible charm to features, that were far from having been formed in nature’s best mould, or even her second-best.

He had been brought up by an uncle in Derbyshire, whose estate being contiguous to that of Sir

Samuel Freemantle, the families were on terms of intimacy ; but Charles Freemantle being quite a child, when Alfred Dufforth was approaching, in his own ideas, towards man's estate, the dawn of their friendship commenced, by his giving to Charles certain small cannons and miniature ships, which he began to look upon with contempt, as appertaining unto himself, at the advanced age of fifteen.

At twenty Alfred entered the army, and, in after years, when he occasionally visited the estate in Derbyshire, he found Charles Freemantle advancing rapidly towards a companionable age.

In the same year, the uncle of Dufforth and Sir Samuel Freemantle both died, and the two young men succeeded to their several estates, and from that time were united in the strictest ties of friendship, though nothing could be more dissimilar than their tastes, dispositions, and manner of thinking : but Sir Charles was one of those who cannot ' go alone,' and he wisely selected a friend who was able and willing to guide him.

" Well, Charles, what more misfortunes have you met with ? Has anybody else been glad to see you at the Opera ? or have you received an invitation to another ball ? Upon my soul ! that was an unlucky business about the Opera, though ! I don't wonder you were ill after it. What surprises me is, that people *should* be glad to see you with that melancholy face — it frightened Miss Bransby from dancing with you, depend upon it."

" My face is not quite so unattractive as you may imagine," said Sir Charles, at the same time putting into the major's hand the anonymous letter

he had received on the preceding day. “ Read that, and tell me what you think of it.”

The major read it attentively. “ What I think of it ? I think what any man of common sense must think — that the writer is some manœuvring miss, who, upon deliberation, has arrived at the conclusion, that a good-looking young baronet, with fifteen thousand a year, is no bad speculation.”

“ However that may be, I suppose you would advise me to answer it ?”

“ Oh ! yes, answer it — to be sure — that is commanded by all the laws of gallantry ; but keep on the safe side, Charles ; don’t get yourself into a scrape, and then expect me to help you out of it.”

“ You need not fear,” said the baronet, laughing, “ I’m in no danger of marrying upon such an introduction.”

“ Don’t make too sure of that — Egad ! Charles, I long to see the future mistress of Myrtlewood-hall ; she will certainly be the very perfection of womankind — a rural deity ; for you will, of course, seclude her in hall and bower, unexposed to the contaminating influence of this wicked world. But I have brought news from Portsmouth you will be glad to hear. Talbot is coming to England.”

“ Is it possible ! how did you hear it ?”

“ From one of the officers, who has lately received a letter from him. He writes that he shall embark in the *Minerva*, from Bengal, and expects to arrive at the end of May. He makes mention of some relations of Lord Bransby, who are coming by the same vessel — General Cameron, and his

nephew, a young Indian, immensely rich. I have heard of the old general; — he will bring a mine of wealth to the Bransbys; Miss Bransby will be more attractive than ever; pity she takes no notice of you!"

"Poor Talbot!" exclaimed Sir Charles, not heeding this last observation — "how happy he will be to see his home again, after so long an absence; his mother, too, and her interesting protégée — Talbot is not one likely to forget his old attachments."

"Ah! I remember how he used to preach about first love — and a sweet girl she is too. Apropos, Charles, I wonder you have never thought of bestowing upon her the dignity of 'Ladyship; *there*, there is no rage for fashion; no display, no coquetry — all simple nature: she is, decidedly, the very thing for my Lady Freemantle."

"She is a very charming girl I confess; but too — too — what shall I term it? — too *matter-of-fact* to please me. There's too much simplicity, and too little sublimity of soul; — in short, though very amiable, she is not exactly —"

"By heavens! I've no patience with you! I believe if an angel came upon earth for the purpose of becoming your bride, your ingenious penetration would discover some little imperfection that would not glide easily down your delicate throat!"

"Nay, I am not so very unreasonable as to be proof against the power of a celestial being, or of any mortal bearing affinity to such."

"Perhaps," continued Dufforth, "your amatory epistle there was penned by some unearthly

hand ; pray, how did you receive it ? — Did you awaken from a delightful vision and find it on your pillow ? or was it brought by some mysterious visitant, who vanished into empty air as soon as he had fulfilled his mission ? ”

Sir Charles laughed. “ No, it came in the most unromantic manner possible — by the ‘ twopenny post unpaid.’ ”

“ *N'importe* — it was only because her divinity-ship could not find a proper messenger, so she dropped the letter from the skies into the post-box.”

A loud knock at the door interrupted this railery. “ By heaven ! it is that eternal bore, Clayton — a formal, prosing fool ! — what can he want here ? ”

“ Mr. Augustus Clayton,” said a footman, opening the door to its full extent ; and in stalked a dull, heavy-looking personage in spectacles, whose age it was impossible to guess nearer than one might suppose it to be between twenty and forty. He approached the breakfast-table with slow and measured tread ; and, in the tone of solemn importance, in which he always delivered himself of the most common-place observation, doled forth the following words of salutation : — “ Major Dufforth, how do you do ? I am most happy to hear that your late journey has produced a salutary effect upon your health. Sir Charles Freemantle, I hope you are well ; I am happy to imagine, from the unusual duration of your stay in town, that you at length prefer the world of gaiety to the solitary shades that environ your secluded retreat of

Myrtlewood. I confess my own taste inclines me to the former ; for, as Byron observes —

“ I’d rather be the thing that crawls,
Most noxious, o’er a dungeon’s walls,
Than pass my dull, unwarying days
Condemned to meditate and gaze.”

Sir Charles, who had waited patiently the termination of this harangue, was very glad when it came to a close, having felt bound to pay some sort of attention to it, as its commencement implied that it was intended to be addressed to himself, although it was no easy matter to ascertain the fact.

“ I understand, Clayton,” said Dufforth, smothering a laugh, “ that your poetical genius is on the point of blazing forth upon the dazzled world, in a handsome quarto volume, entitled, ‘ Poems, sublime and beautiful, by the Hon. Augustus Clayton.’ — What a sensation they will produce ! ”

“ It is a false report, I assure you. Alas ! my poor genius soars no higher than to admire the compositions of others and decide upon their merits.”

“ Modesty ! nothing but modesty ! If I had half your talent, I would have made a figure long ago. What’s the use of keeping it all to yourself ? — besides, consider the pleasure of hearing it whispered wherever you appear, ‘ That’s Clayton, the great poet ! ’ ”

“ Ah ! my dear friend, you flatter me : if I might indeed indulge the delightful thought, that any trifling effort of my humble muse would contribute, in the smallest degree, to the pleasure of

my friends, I should, probably, be induced to employ my leisure moments in this my favourite pursuit — but fear withholds me."

" Fear ! of what ?"

" Of the world's dread laugh — but, great as is my devotion to the beauties of poesy, it is still exceeded by my enthusiastic fondness for the charms of harmony. I enjoyed an exquisite treat last night in hearing Rossini's beautiful opera of ' Il Barbiere : ' that composition is decidedly one of his happiest efforts."

" Oh ! decidedly," interrupted Dufforth, who dreaded a long dissertation on the relative merits of Rossini, Weber, Auber, &c. &c. about which the honorable Augustus knew as little as those renowned animals who are more celebrated for *ear* than taste — " We all know you have a most critical judgment in music ; that is, if your remarks all emanate from your own brain ; but I strongly suspect you, now and then, borrow an opinion from ' The Times,' or ' Morning Herald.' "

" No — I assure you my opinions are always the result of profound study and deliberation ; — I never think lightly."

" Faith ! if you did, your thinking would be unlike any of your other operations," thought the major.

Augustus continued — " And I particularly cultivate my musical taste ; for, as Shakespeare observes —

' The man that hath not music in his soul,
And is not moved with concord of sweet sounds.
Is fit for treason, war, and stratagems.'

“ Upon my soul ! I acquit you of being fit for any one of these ;—but I say, Clayton, is it possible you can be so vulgar as to go to the opera to hear the music ?”

“ Most certainly — I hope my taste will never be so vitiated by pernicious example as to be engrossed by surrounding objects, when the beautiful tones of Malibran, or the wonderful voice of La Blache, are penetrating my very soul : however bright the eyes that are sparkling around, they have no power to draw my attention from the business of the stage —”

Here Dufforth burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, and poor Clayton, who had got into a labyrinth from which he did not very well know how to extricate himself, and beginning to feel a glimmering and confused idea that the major was quizzing, very soon made his exit.

“ I wonder you encourage that fool,” said Freemantle, “ I cannot have patience to waste three words on him.”

“ I tolerate him about once a month out of pure compassion — for the fellow bores every body to such a degree, with Byron’s poetry and Rossini’s music, that he’s cut every where : nobody can say he has not two ideas, but I believe that is the precise number : so now, if you have finished that paper you have been perusing so indefatigably, we will walk up to White’s.”

CHAPTER III.

LIONEL BRANSBY was one of the numerous instances by which the mistaken judgment of parents is shewn in making matrimonial engagements for their children, before they are able to form wishes for themselves on that important point; for it almost invariably follows that a marriage, where the inclinations of the parties most interested have not been consulted, is contemplated by them with abhorrence, however unobjectionable it may be; and this happens even in cases where a union with each other would have been their most ardent desire, had they been left to follow the free bent of their own inclinations, or stimulated by a little opposition.

People are generally more tenacious of interference on this point than on any other; so much so, that, in forty-nine cases out of fifty, the least attempt to lead the affections towards any particular object, is certain to turn them in a totally different direction. This effect may not always arise from the mere contradiction of our nature, but may be the natural consequence of the steps usually taken by parents to further the accom-

plishment of their wishes : for instance, a man considers it desirable that his daughter shall form an alliance with a certain gentleman, because he is a man of high rank, of vast property, or for any other cogent reason he may choose to assign ; — the young lady demurs ; she is scolded by mamma, lectured by papa, teased to death by aunts and cousins, and fatigued by a constant repetition of the numerous good qualities of the lover, till his name becomes associated in her mind with all the thousand disagreeables she is made to endure on his account, and thus he becomes an object of disgust by the very means that are employed to render him agreeable to the tormented fair one.

It is the same in the opposite sex ; — those chains are lightly worn that a man manufactures for himself : but who does not find the fetters insupportable that are forced upon him by another ?

Lionel was contracted, in infancy, to the Lady Caroline Gresham, the only daughter of Earl Gresham, a man of violent prejudices and obstinate temper. It was in consequence of some important service rendered him by Lord (then Mr.) Bransby, that he was seized with an ardent desire to ally himself more nearly to that gentleman by the union of his daughter with the young Lionel, and, having once taken this resolution, no subsequent event was able to alter it.

At that time Mr. Bransby was by no means in affluent circumstances, and in no expectation of a title ; he therefore gladly embraced a proposal that secured so advantageous a marriage for his son.

In their very early years, the affianced pair were

constant companions and playmates, and quarrelled, and were fond by turns, as is always the case with children who play continually together. They heard frequently that they were to be married when old enough; and it was the invariable threat of the little lady, when they disagreed in any of their infantine sports, that she would not marry him, to which his undeviating reply was, he did not care for that.

It seldom happens that two persons of opposite sexes, intimate from childhood, feel a warmer attachment for each other, as they increase in years, than that which exists, or ought to exist, between a brother and sister. It is not in the nature of love to be first excited by a familiar object; it is not a passion that grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength—*tout au contraire*—the suddenness with which it bursts upon the senses constitutes its greatest charm, and the obstinacy with which it blinds itself to all that might damp its ardour, prolongs its existence in the heart.

Love was never made to walk with us through life. He comes in the spring time, and wanders away in summer: and oh! how much better would it be if, instead of repining at his absence, we were to seek a companion more fitted to the season.

Certainly he who comes to us in childhood, and remains with us in after-life, is not love.

When Lady Caroline Gresham attained the age of fifteen, she began to discover there were other beings in the world than Lionel Bransby, and to think it unjust indeed that she was debarred from that privilege so exclusively the right of her sex,

of exciting the hopes, the fears, and the jealousies of those who might contend for her favour, and the pleasure of exercising her own power over them. She might as well have been without the charms that nature had given her — for they failed to please him whom alone it was her duty to please ; and they who would have yielded to their influence, dared only to admire at a distance, being well aware she was the destined bride of another.

Lady Caroline was, therefore, far from being happy in her father's choice. Young as she then was, she saw the homage that was paid to her beauty ; she found that in the ranks of fashion her worshippers would be numerous, and her young heart panted to be free, not only that she might lead triumphantly the band of slaves that would have worn her chains, but that she might select a partner with whom she could be happy.

It was after one of the assemblies to which her age now procured her entrance, under her father's escort, and at which she met with more than usual admiration, that she, with some warmth, and perhaps rather imprudently, expressed to the earl her sentiments of abhorrence at the compulsory engagement by which she had been deprived of liberty, even before she knew the word. The haughty peer, who entertained very peculiar notions of filial obedience, and who held his promise sacred as the law of the Medes and Persians, ' which altereth not,' was struck dumb at what he considered so monstrous a violation of that passive obedience a child owes to a father ; and, in the first paroxysm of his rage, he made a will,

which he probably intended more for the purpose of inspiring a momentary terror, than of causing permanent misery ; and to prevent the young lady from indulging in any discontents for the future.

By this unfortunate document, it was decreed that the whole of his property (which was very considerable, independent of the entailed estates,) if the marriage contract should not be fulfilled, should go to a distant relative, who was next heir to the title, and his daughter, in consequence, be left utterly destitute.

In the drawing up of this arbitrary instrument, the old earl, it is supposed, not entertaining the most remote idea that it would ever be acted upon, made no exception in case the failure should be on the part of the gentleman, a possibility he had, in his anger, forgotten. The will was made, and in three days afterwards Lord Gresham slept with his ancestors.

Grief for the loss of her only parent for a while prevented Lady Caroline from reflecting on the peculiar and unpleasant circumstances in which she was placed ; but when her thoughts and feelings returned again to their natural channel, she felt them most poignantly. Her delicacy was wounded at finding herself so completely at the mercy of a man who evidently was indifferent about her ; her pride was hurt that he should thus be forced into a union he would gladly have escaped from ; and her self-love, of which the most amiable possess their share, was far from being gratified by his chilling politeness.

Lionel was, on his part, equally embarrassed by this unforeseen event : he felt bound by all the ties

of honour, generosity, and every good feeling, to fulfil the engagement, which became more irksome to him, in proportion to the necessity of its completion. He was too amiable to consider only his own happiness, and resolved to make any sacrifice rather than precipitate a lovely girl from the exalted sphere in which she was born to move, into the depth of poverty and dependence, with no resource but the pity and benevolence of strangers.

During the life of the earl, Lionel had made himself quite easy on the subject, trusting to the habitual goodness of his father not to force him into an alliance against his inclinations ; but this hope was now of no avail ; and feeling that he must submit to fate, delicacy prompted him to conceal, as much as possible, the struggle it cost him, from the already but too conscious object of it.

With such feelings on both sides, the prospect of happiness was but small, and Lord Bransby saw, with deep regret, now it was too late, that he had acted unwisely ; but as it was past all remedy, he prudently kept silence on the subject ; — the marriage was contemplated, and spoken of as a thing of course, and the time of its celebration fixed for the ensuing spring, when the bride elect would attain the age of twenty-one.

Lady Caroline Gresham, in conformity with a wish expressed by the earl a short time before his death, resided with a maiden aunt, her only near relative, a woman of large fortune, but whose vanity and folly exposed her to the derision of all the world, and gave continual vexation to her niece, who had frequent cause to blush for the ridiculous behaviour of her protectress. This foolish old

woman, who could not be persuaded that she was past the bloom of youth, though on the verge of sixty, would persist in decorating her diminutive and withered person with as many trinkets and other fashionable baubles, as though she were a girl of eighteen ; and even at the unattractive age I have mentioned, had not abandoned all thoughts of making a brilliant conquest. She had failed several times in her various attempts, but, like a true heroine, undismayed by ill-success, she was incessantly trying new experiments.

Her present essay was on the heart of the Honourable Mr. Clayton, upon whose feelings she had been practising for some time past. Nothing had the fair assailant omitted that she thought likely to aid her endeavours ; but the obdurate Augustus remained untouched by the tender passion ; she had admired his genius, had listened to his quotations, had quoted herself—alas ! all was to no purpose ; not the least progress was made—his admiration went no further than allowing the lady to be “ a very clever, sensible woman, with a great deal of taste and discernment—a pity she was old and ugly ! ” This last observation, with which Mr. Clayton never failed to end his eulogium on Miss Moreland, fortunately never reached her ears, and thus, in blissful ignorance of his ungallant sentiments, she still carried on the siege ; and, with undaunted courage, ordered a new wig, and a hat of the most approved taste, from Paris ; hoping much from the united powers of this reinforcement.

CHAPTER IV.

THE domestic arrangements of Lord Bransby were under the superintendence of Lady Hamilton, his sister, a widow who had resided with him since the death of his wife. She was a lady of agreeable manners, and independent fortune, but, like her brother, of quiet, domesticated habits ; in fact, the family altogether was more remarkable for its high respectability than for any pretensions to *haut ton*.

“ Lionel is, certainly, a most entertaining companion at a breakfast-table — do you not think so ? ” said Louise to Emily.

“ As he is every where else,” replied Emily.

Lionel raised his eyes from the newspaper, on which they had been fixed for the last twenty minutes, wholly unconscious of the torturing suspense in which he was keeping poor Louise, who was impatiently waiting to get a glimpse of the advertisements.

“ I am afraid, Emily, that is but an equivocal compliment of yours — how am I to take it ? ”

“Refer to your own conscience,” she replied laughing.

“Nay, I would rather refer to you than to my conscience; being certain of receiving a more indulgent answer; but, in default of being entertaining,—and I plead guilty to the charge,—I will give you something to speculate upon;—ladies are fond of a mystery; and here is one that I should imagine peculiarly adapted to their taste.”—He read from the “Morning Post”—

“C. F. has no objection to receive lectures from so charming a source; and sincerely hopes that she who has so kindly undertaken the task of reform, will not leave it unfinished.”

The sudden colour that mounted to the cheek of Louise, and the conscious glance exchanged between her and her cousin must have been observed, had not Lord Bransby, whose thoughts were engrossed by some letters he was reading, at that moment addressed a question to Lionel, which engaged his immediate attention.

“I am surprised,” said Lady Hamilton, “that the public journals should sanction such improper correspondences.”

“My dear madam!” said Lionel, “why should you conclude that the correspondence is an improper one?”

“I draw my conclusion from the clandestine manner in which it appears to be carried on. Where there is nothing wrong, there can be no occasion for concealment; and it is my opinion that the press ought rather to discourage than give a facility to any kind of imprudence.”

“ Bravo ! aunt,” exclaimed Lionel ; — “ you should put up for a seat in parliament, and vote against the liberty of the press. But does not your ladyship think it would be a hard task for the editors of newspapers to keep this wicked world in good order ? and do you not suppose, if they did refuse to insert such paragraphs as these, people would discover some other method of communicating secretly with each other ? ”

“ Oh ! I have not the least doubt that they who are inclined to do wrong have very fertile inventions. A housebreaker finds out the means to undo locks and bolts ; but that is no reason why we should leave our door open, to afford him an opportunity of walking in without any trouble.”

“ A very ingenious idea of yours, Lady Hamilton ; I am perfectly convinced that a great portion of the depravity of the age is entirely owing to ‘ The Morning Post.’ ”

“ I shall begin to suspect, Lionel,” said her ladyship good-humouredly, “ that you are a party concerned in this secret, as you defend it so warmly.”

“ What a cruel suspicion ! but if it be well-founded, I beg, Emily, you will look upon the petition as addressed to you, praying to be lectured into a more agreeable companion at the breakfast-table.”

“ I am afraid lectures do not generally have the effect of making people more agreeable,” said Emily.

“ That depends entirely upon what sort of lips they proceed from. And now, as we have suffi-

ciently discussed the subject of the mystery, here is something rather more intelligible.”—

“ *Matrimony.* — A young gentleman of rank and fortune, who flatters himself that his personal and mental attractions are such as to entitle him to the regard and admiration of the gentler sex, wishes to unite his destiny with any lady, young, beautiful, and accomplished, with a congenial mind, and a fortune of not less than twenty thousand pounds. One who has a taste for poetry will be preferred. He has long sought

“ A something to be loved.”

Any lady of elegant and refined sentiments will secure her own happiness by entrusting it to one who agrees with the immortal Byron in thinking that

“ — all who happiness would win
Must share it— happiness was born a twin.”

Address — Montagu — Verey’s, Regent Street.”

“ By heavens ! this is the most undisguised piece of effrontery I ever saw !” exclaimed Lionel.

All the ladies were highly amused, and even Lord Bransby joined in the general laugh, when the arrival of a letter from Paris furnished new and more interesting matter for conversation.

“ From the darling count ?” said Louise, joyfully — “ I hope this is to give notice of his speedy return.”

“ My dear Louise,” said her aunt, “ you must really be more guarded in your expressions — it was very allowable, when the count was a mere

child, to call him ‘ darling ;’ but it is by no means proper to apply such an epithet to a young man ‘ over twenty.’ ”

Louise smiled at her ladyship’s grave remonstrance, and anxiously waited to hear the contents of the count’s letter, which her papa did not seem inclined to make known until he had perused the whole of it—a work of more time than accorded with the impatient temper of his daughter. At length his lordship closed the letter, which, he said, contained some political information that prevented him from reading it aloud ; “ but,” he added, “ I have the pleasure to inform you that we may expect to see the count in a few days ; he is in perfect health, and desires me to tell you, Louise, that he has made such rapid progress in drawing, and chess-playing, that he expects soon almost to equal you in the former, and to excel you in the latter.”

“ Oh, vanity ! excel me ! — I shall teach him more humility by beating him the next time we play together : but I am glad we shall have him so soon with us again ; we are growing insufferably dull, and want somebody among us with a little spirit ; for really, Lionel, you have become very stupid of late — I can’t think what is the matter with you.”

This was said by Louise in her usual thoughtless manner, without the least intention of giving pain ; and she was hurt and surprised to find that her brother, instead of receiving it with his usual good-humour, bit his lip, and walked to a window, where he remained standing in a thoughtful atti-

tude, till every one had quitted the room except himself and his sister.

“ My dearest Lionel,” said the affectionate girl, extending her hand to him, “ I hope you are not offended at my foolish observation — you cannot suppose I was serious, or that any society is preferable in my mind to yours.”

“ I did not think you meant to offend me, Louise — it was my consciousness of the truth of your remark that made me feel it. I have grown very stupid of late — I cannot account for the change, but, indeed, it is sometimes quite an effort to appear gay.”

“ You are not happy then, my dear brother — for surely you would not feel thus depressed without a cause ; and if there does exist a cause for uneasiness, why not confide it to some one who might advise and assist you ?”

“ I am not unhappy, my love,” said he, kissing her affectionately — “ it is only that my temper is altered :” then, in a gayer tone, he added — “ Gravity is becoming in old age ; and I suppose, now my schoolboy days are over, I already feel some of the symptoms of that respectable time of life. Recollect, I am twenty-four ; gray hairs, cough, and rheumatism, already begin to exhibit their shadowy forms in the perspective ; then how can you wonder that I should begin to be rather sedate ? But let us say no more about it ; — do you intend to ride this morning ?”

“ Yes — but, Lionel, I must tell you of a frolic I have projected. It is my decided opinion that the elegant matrimonial advertisement you read this morning, is the sublime production of Mr.

Clayton ; which is an act of premeditated cruelty on his part towards poor Miss Moreland, who still continues to walk round the square every morning, at one o'clock, for the purpose of improving her complexion by gentle exercise, that she may appear more charming in his eyes. Now I am thinking of writing a note, professing the utmost admiration of his beautiful address to the gentle sex, and appointing a meeting in Grosvenor-square. It will be sufficient to name the hour, for she is as regular as clock-work ; and, that there may be no possibility of his mistaking the person, I will describe that little frightful poodle-dog that is her constant companion ; she always leads it by a red ribbon, which will be a sufficient hint for him. I promise myself no little amusement from the interview ; for every body knows she has offered herself to him four times already, and been refused ; it will be a second edition of ‘ Monsieur Tonson.’ ”

“ Three times only, my good sister ; do keep within the bounds of moderation ; besides, you are building your hopes of amusement upon an uncertain foundation — you are not sure that Clayton is the man.”

“ Oh ! I am pretty well convinced nobody else could write such inimitable stuff ; and then, his favourite author being pressed into the service, leaves very little doubt of the fact.”

Lionel agreed that appearances were very black against the gentleman in question ; and, as he entertained no very violent affection for Miss Moreland, he did not object to the scheme, which was executed forthwith, by despatching the proposed epistle to ‘ Montagu, at Verey’s.’

This done, Louise began to think of replying to her own correspondent, to whom she addressed the following lines :—

“ To Sir Charles Freemantle, Bart.

“ I am happy to find I have a more tractable pupil than I imagined, and begin to entertain hopes of your rapid improvement, for the advancement of which, I intend to commence a course of lectures : the first, to be an enquiry into the causes of your distaste for society in general, but more particularly that of the female race. Most people would consider it a decided case of lunacy, — but my opinion is, that the malady arises from too much seclusion, and that, with proper attention and *good advice*, any fatal consequences may be prevented.

“ In the first place, you shut yourself up in the country, and wander about, among waving woods, and purling streams, till you identify yourself with the inanimate objects that surround you, and become as unfit for the intercourse of civilized beings as the very trees themselves.

“ In this solitude you brood over the faults of poor womankind, and form a judgment of them, without giving yourself the trouble to study their real characters, and balance their virtues against their follies. Is not this true ? — You know it is ; and, if you speak candidly, will own that you know nothing of the hearts and minds you deprecate. Can you really think we are beings created without intellect, without feelings ; or with only such as render us inferior to the animals that are guided merely by instinct ? Education, and a compliance

with the general customs of the world, may, perhaps, tincture our manners with too much of frivolity — but these are the lighter parts that float on the surface. They who search deeper will find that a woman's mind is capable of as great exertions, as noble sentiments, and as liberal feelings, as that of loftier man, how superior soever he may think himself.

“ Some women are very silly and trifling, I allow — but are all men wise ? and does it not occur to your transcendent understanding, that you are finding out motes in eyes where you ought to discover nothing but the brightness — while you fail to perceive the beam, &c. I am sorry to give any hints about *motes* and *beams* — ‘ mais le reméde est, de vous faire croire à la maladie.’

“ Listen, then, to my advice.— Remain in town till the end of the season ; think more of its pleasures, and less of its follies ; endeavour to make yourself agreeable, and let me see you at the Opera to-morrow.

CONSTANTIA.

CHAPTER V.

THE morning was remarkably fine: Lady Caroline Gresham, Miss Moreland, Louise and Emily, were taking a drive round the Regent's Park, accompanied by Lionel on horseback.

“A delightful morning, ladies,” said the Duke of Belltown, riding up to the side of the carriage, attended by his constant satellite, Augustus Clayton, whom the duke found a very convenient friend on many occasions, particularly when any little transaction was to be managed in which he did not choose to appear himself, for the pliant Augustus never objected to compromise with his dignity, provided he might remain on intimate terms with his grace, in the eyes of the world.

“A delightful morning, ladies; pray do you intend to honour the bears and monkeys to-day?”

“We scarcely need, since they honour us,” whispered Louise to Emily, whose suppressed laugh aroused some suspicion in the mind of the duke.

“Ah! Miss Bransby, I am afraid you are too severe.”

"Not at all, in the present instance," she replied, laughing.

"Still cruel! I cannot say with Ledyard — 'Gentle woman, ever kind' — except to Miss St. Clare, and she is ever kind and gentle," bowing to Emily, who acknowledged the compliment with a smile.

"How do you do, Mr. Clayton?" simpered forth Miss Moreland, poking her head forward, to display, in all its glory, the new hat that had only arrived yesterday, and whose spotless purity was yet unsullied by the unpitying dust of the Regent's Park.

"Much happier for your kind enquiry, fair lady," replied the solemn beau, wheeling his horse round to the other side of the carriage, to the infinite delight of the enamoured fair, who, in the innocence of her heart, really thought his words were meant to express his feelings; whereas nothing could be further from his intention, or, in fact, from his ability, for he had no more originality of thought than of conversation; he never spoke without making a speech; and that speech was either borrowed entirely, or fashioned from what he had read; therefore, when a question was addressed to him, he referred to his memory for something that would form a showy answer, without giving himself the trouble to have an idea on the subject, but quite content to repeat the sentiments of other people.

It was exactly the same with regard to his feelings; he had none of his own, but collected, from different authors, what description of feeling it was natural and usual to experience on various occasions,

and these he gave out as expressive of his own state of mind under similar circumstances. Miss Moreland listened with rapture to his eloquent recitations; and the happy twain, occupied with admiring, not each other, but one and the same object, which object was Mr. Clayton himself, were quite abstracted, in mind at least, from the rest of the company.

Louise continued to carry on a lively conversation with the duke till they reached the Zoological Gardens, in which she proposed to walk for half an hour, as the morning was so inviting.

A great number of carriages were drawn up near the entrance, and the gardens were filled with fashionable company; or, to use the words of a foreigner, with whom it was a favourite place of resort, "there was a great deal of world there."

And now Augustus, in order to make a variation from the old lady, endeavoured to make himself amiable in the eyes of the young ones, by plentifully bestowing his pity on the savage inhabitants of the place, lamenting their hard fate in being brought from their native wilds, to be confined in that petty space, where, to augment their misery, they are perpetually condemned to behold their mortal enemy *man*, without the power of following the impulse of nature.

"Very true," said Louise, endeavouring to look serious; "I perfectly agree with you, Mr. Clayton. It is a great pity that the poor animals are not immediately let loose to devour us all. What a treat it would be for them, poor things! and just what nature intended."

"Regardez le solitaire," said the duke, looking

through his glass at a tall stately figure walking alone, with folded arms, and eyes bent to the earth, apparently in deep contemplation.

Louise looked round.—“ See, Caroline, there is your mournful lover, your melancholy Jacques. It must certainly be your presence that has attracted him so far out of his element ; unless, indeed, he is part of the show.”

“ Melancholy is no subject for ridicule, Louise,” said Lady Caroline reproachfully ; and then added in a lower tone, “ and let me once more entreat of you not to join my name so frequently with that of this stranger.”

“ Nay, my love, if you make such a serious affair of it, I shall begin to think Lionel must shoot him in good earnest.”

“ Or myself,” thought Lionel, who had caught these last words ; but he smiled, and said nothing, while Lady Caroline smiled too ; but she also sighed, and felt as if she would prefer even the gloomy object of their present observation, to her elegant but indifferent lover.

The individual in question was one whose appearance indeed but ill accorded with the gay objects that presented themselves on every side ; and in the olden days of superstition, he might well have passed for a wandering and unhappy spirit, hovering around the scenes in which it could no longer mingle.

“ That is a very mysterious person,” said Clayton, and reminds me of these lines :

“ Tho’ here awhile he learned to moralize,
For meditation fixed at times on him —
And conscious reason whispered to despise
His early youth mispent in maddest whim.”

“Elegant lines! and how beautifully delivered!” exclaimed Miss Moreland — such pathos! so much feeling! — will you do me the favour to repeat them?”

Augustus, whose unsuccessful attempt to ingratiate himself with the young ladies, had driven him back to his old resource, gave his arm to the maiden, nothing loth, and led her away to reiterate the admired lines; and as Louise observed, he ought, at least to have felt grateful to her; for, when all others turned a deaf ear to his declamation, in her he was sure to meet, not only a patient, but pleased auditor, an invaluable acquisition to any one who is fond of reciting.

Le solitaire still continued to saunter along the walks, and, whether from design or accident, was always near the Bransbys, without coming in actual contact with them; till at length, he turned round abruptly, and, to the great astonishment of all the party except one, joined them.

After a few slight observations to the rest, he walked on, in silence, by the side of Lady Caroline Gresham, who had quitted Lionel’s arm, as by instinct, on his first approach.

The path was narrow, and she soon found herself at a little distance, and, as it were, alone with the melancholy Jaques.

Lady Caroline was, in fact, the only person for whom this singular being appeared to feel the least degree of interest; the only one with whom he would converse unreservedly; and this attention from him was as unaccountable to herself as it was remarkable to others. She sometimes felt afraid of him, sometimes grateful for the regard that was

bestowed so exclusively on herself: but the predominant feeling was curiosity to know who he was, and from whence he came; as he had but lately appeared among the higher circles, which no one could doubt was his proper sphere. He was evidently a gentleman, and a man of fortune; kept a handsome establishment; his servants wore splendid liveries; but he received no visitors, and accepted no invitations. Accident had introduced him to the Bransbys, and he had availed himself of it, principally, as it should seem, to form that intimacy with Lady Caroline Gresham, which had gained him the appellation of her melancholy lover.

“ I scarcely expected to meet Mr. De Tracey in this gay place,” said Lady Caroline; “ I thought his taste would lead him to select a more retired spot for his walks, and that he found no pleasure in mixing with crowds like these.”

“ I find no pleasure anywhere, my dear young lady; pleasure and I have long been strangers to each other; alas! it is many years since its name has been to me more than an unmeaning sound. Unmeaning, indeed, it ever is, since that which to-day we call pleasure, to-morrow may become tedious and disgusting, if the frame of mind be not the same.”

“ Yet,” said Lady Caroline, “ I would wish to believe that none are shut out from every source of enjoyment, and that they alone are wholly miserable, who do not seek to be otherwise.”

“ Can you tell me where the means are to be found?”

“ Surely, not in solitude — surely, not in flying from the world, and the friends who would sym-
pa-

thize with and soothe your sorrows, if such oppress you.”

“ Friends ! tell me, rather, to be soothed by the wild roaring of these savage natives of the desert — in that there is no deception ; they pretend no gentleness to lull suspicion ; but rather warn, by their hostile roar, their destined prey ; while man, under the specious show of friendship, conceals his base designs, and smiles you into security, even while his dagger is aimed at your heart.”

“ You judge too harshly of mankind ; a single instance of ingratitude, or broken faith, ought not to draw down your enmity upon all the human race.”

“ But when those instances of ingratitude are many ; when that faith is broken by those who were linked to us by the dearest, the strongest ties — where, then, are we to look for sympathy ? — in whom, then, are we to confide ?”

“ Yet if all who meet with injuries and disappointment were to withdraw themselves from the world, every tie of society would soon be broken — all that gives a charm to our existence would be at an end ; even if we cannot forgive those who have wronged us, is it liberal, is it just, to extend our resentment to all the world, for the offences of a few individuals ?”

“ Perhaps not ; but philosophy and feeling are often at variance ; the tree that has once been blighted can never bloom again, how bright soever the sun may shine upon it ; but you speak like all who are young and happy.”

“ Do I speak like one who is happy ? alas ! I would I were !”

" And are you unhappy ? you ! possessed of all that the misjudging world deems sufficient to render you as blessed as mortal can be — youth, beauty, riches, and high rank — what, then, can disturb your peace ? "

Lady Caroline blushed, and was silent ; she feared she had spoken too unguardedly to one of whom she knew so little ; for although she had conversed frequently with De Tracey, and become gradually more and more interested in his fate ; although his age, his manners, and habits of life, precluded the least idea of his being a lover, and she therefore felt less scrupulous in talking freely with him, than if he had been a younger and a different man, it was by no means her intention to make him her confidant, and she was startled to find that she was, insensibily, being led to do so.

" You do not answer my question," said De Tracey.

" Is it possible that you, with all these advantages, can have any cause for sorrow ? you are yet too young to have experienced the bitter pangs of friendship repaid with treachery,—of confidence and esteem, with deception and ingratitude."

" Oh ! do not persuade me that these are everyday occurrences. Believing this, with what feelings must we look forward to passing many years in such a world ? Should we not rather endeavour to forget the ills that have been, and hope the days to come will bring truer friends, and more grateful hearts ? "

De Tracey regarded her for a moment with an expressive look ; then said in a softened tone — " Lady, you but now confessed that you are un-

happy ; do you, then, place your hopes of happiness in the future ? You answer not — you tremble — I might infer from thence that days to come offer no very alluring prospect to your eyes."

" This is cruel !" said the agitated girl, suppressing, with a strong effort, a burst of tears. " There may be causes to disturb the mind's tranquillity, that we cannot, ought not to reveal."

" Such are not yours, Lady Caroline Gresham ; and I can venture to affirm they are not irremediable — the causes that interrupt your peace may be removed."

" Oh ! never, never !"

" You deceive yourself ; that the task is difficult I well know ; and to effect it, you must trust wholly to one who has both the power and the will to assist you ; a faint reliance will not avail — you must give your entire, your implicit confidence."

" And where shall I find such a friend ?"

" You shall find him in *me*, if you have courage."

" Alas ! Mr. De Tracey, you know not what you offer."

" Yes, Lady, I do know what I offer ; for though you may hide from the world in general the cause of that sadness, which ought not to dwell upon so youthful a brow, you have not concealed it from me, who can read on your countenance what is passing in your mind ; and I have often watched it, when I have been, myself, unseen. You look surprised, and wonder, perhaps, what can prompt me to do this ; then listen to me. Besides yourself there is but one other being on earth who holds any place in my heart ; it is for the sake of you and that one that I still support an existence which has

long been a burthen to me, that I still mingle with a world I hate—I love you; but it is with such affection as a father feels for his darling child; I wish to see you happy, and to that end I would sacrifice every other consideration. Fear me not; I may do good, but I cannot harm you; and, as I hold converse with no man, your secret will be safe with me as with yourself.—Will you trust me?"

At this moment Louise, who thought the *tête-à-tête* had lasted quite long enough, turned round to interrupt it. She longed to see and hear a little more of De Tracey, and hoped he would continue with them while they remained in the gardens; but in this expectation she was disappointed; for, as soon as Lady Caroline rejoined her party, he bowed and walked away, without uttering a single word.

"Upon my word! Caroline," said Louise, half piqued, half-laughing, "Monsieur Jaques is not very complimentary to me and Emily—his conduct is not at all flattering: had all the tigers in the garden broken loose, he could not have made a more abrupt retreat. I don't know how Emily likes it, for she takes all these things very passively; but for my part, I vow an eternal enmity to all these extraordinary people who set themselves up for phenomena, stalk about alone, look dismal, and then think they are privileged to walk away without making a bow, or saying 'good morning.'"

"As for me," said Emily, laughing, "I feel perfectly easy without either the bow, or the adieu, for I must own I cannot attach much importance

or value to them, although I think very highly of Mr. de Tracey."

"What provokes me," continued Louise, "is, that he can be eloquent enough when he pleases—a perfect Cicero. Pray, Caroline, are his orations very entertaining?"

"Yes, very," replied Lady Caroline, scarcely knowing what she answered, or what was asked.

"We may infer," said the duke, "that monsieur le solitaire has an *exclusive* taste, or that her ladyship is gifted with the irresistible power of the basilisk, and he cannot withdraw himself from her gaze. I must confess that, were I Mr. Bransby, I should not take things quite so easy."

"And if the enemy were the Duke of Belltown, probably I should not," replied Lionel, laughing.

"Oh! 'pon my honour, you overpower me;—do I not blush, Miss Bransby?"

"I am not quite sure," she replied, looking at him rather archly, for it was generally whispered that his grace had recourse to art to improve his naturally pale complexion.

Lady Caroline was so entirely absorbed by her own reflections on the extraordinary conversation she had just been engaged in, that she did not utter another word during the remainder of the walk. "Who is this man," she thought, "and why should he be thus interested for me? What other being does he speak of, and wherefore involve it in mystery? How can I confide in him, ignorant as I am alike of his meaning and intentions? If he really have the power of giving me back my liberty, what prevents him from telling me so, without extorting a confidence that cannot be given

with propriety — with delicacy ? Oh ! that I could be assured of his ability to restore me to freedom and to peace ; yet, incomprehensible as this appears, he can have no motive to deceive me. How shall I act ? where can I turn for advice ? ” All these thoughts passed in rapid and painful succession through her brain, till she was lost in a labyrinth of conjecture, which became still more bewildering at every view.

Louise was leaning carelessly on the arm of the duke, listening, with pretended pleasure, to his compliments and tender nothings, for she knew she might indulge in a flirtation, without being under the least apprehension as to any injury he might sustain from the too great susceptibility of his feelings.

In the midst of one of her liveliest sallies, Sir Charles Freemantle and Major Dufforth passed : they bowed, and Louise, as she returned the salutation, looked confused, and wished she had not been making herself quite so agreeable to her noble admirer.

“ Belltown is certainly the veriest puppy on earth,” said Sir Charles, pettishly, as soon as they had passed.

“ I begin to think, Charles, you are jealous of him ; — did he not prevent you from dancing one night with that same pretty Miss Bransby ? ”

“ Jealous of him ! and on account of such a true-bred flirt ! The real spirit of coquetry is in that girl — I would not marry her, if she were the goddess of beauty.”

“ Nor would I,” said Dufforth ; “ for I strongly suspect Madame Venus would be a very trouble-

some sort of a wife ; and there might be many little inconveniences attending so close a relationship : one's pistols would perhaps be in requisition now and then, which might not be altogether so pleasant.

“ On account of the cause, or the effect ? ” asked the baronet.

“ A little of both perhaps.—I am no friend to duelling : give me the glorious excitement of a fair field : there the game is noble, and the stake worth playing for : but I do not set so little value on life as to place it, without very sufficient cause, at the disposal of any puppy who may happen to have a practised eye and a steady hand, though his field exploits never went further than shooting at a target.”

“ A hit at me ; ” replied Sir Charles : “ but though a billiard player does not forfeit his reputation by refusing to play at bagatelle ; I, who could not avail myself of your arguments to get rid of an affair of honour, will take care not to run any unnecessary risk.”

CHAPTER VI.

ON returning home from the gardens, Lionel perceived a carriage at the door, the aspect of which decided him to prolong his ride, most ungallantly preferring the company of his beautiful black gelding to that of the ladies he knew he should encounter by venturing into the drawing-room.

There are certain beings, in all the various grades of society, who, with a species of vanity miserably at variance with the want of the gifts of fortune, deprive themselves of those comforts they might enjoy, in order to have the reputation of possessing luxuries they can only covet. The *parvenus* fashionables alluded to, exhibit this failing by closing the shutters of their houses, at a particular time of the year, that Brighton, Paris, or any place but deserted London may be supposed blessed with their presence ; cloistering themselves in real discomfort among the back settlements of their

colonies, for the empty gratification of being thought—out of town.

Of this class was Lady Arlington, who, with her two daughters, was paying a visit, *en passant*, to Lady Hamilton, when Louise and Emily returned from their *promenade*.

The elder Miss Arlington had gone through seven or eight winters since the interesting age of eighteen: she had appeared at every body's ball; she had always dressed in the first style of fashion, but she had *not* succeeded in the one grand point; and Lady Arlington began to despair of such an event, even though she lowered her pretensions from a coronet to an untitled heirship, and again to a younger son with a commission in actual possession, or a prospective bishopric.

Miss Arlington was decidedly unlovely, of a fretful disposition, and had always been either too idle, or too ill-tempered, to make herself mistress of any of those shining qualifications that are so requisite in this refined age. Like many ladies who, from sour looks, peevish tempers, or any other disagreeable causes, make a failure in their matrimonial speculations; she had lately affected a taste for literature, and a contempt for more frivolous pleasures.

Her sister was a tall, elegant-looking girl, with downcast eyes, timid manners, and extremely silent.

“ We are come begging, this morning,” said Lady Arlington — “ Marian and I wish to see the new opera to-morrow; and, as I have no box myself this season, for we go so seldom, it is scarcely worth while, we came to beg a seat in yours,

which Lady Hamilton has been kind enough to promise us."

"We are all going," said Louise, "and shall be happy to have so agreeable an addition to our party; but I hope you intend to take Lavinia, as we can make room for her with the greatest ease."

Lavinia coloured, breathed quick, and looked at her mamma. "You are very good," said Lady Arlington, "but I am not fond of taking children to public places."

"Oh! dear no," added Miss Marian, "Lavinia is much better at home; any thing that would distract her attention from her studies, ought to be avoided."

Poor Lavinia looked disappointed, and Lady Hamilton, who was extremely good-natured, requested that she might be permitted to go, and added, that she thought young ladies, who were studying music, derived great benefit from hearing a good opera occasionally; that it was more likely than any other thing, to improve their taste and style of playing. This last argument had some weight with Lady Arlington, who was very anxious about Lavinia's acquirements, having experienced the ill-effects of the want of them in her eldest daughter, and she at length consented that she should accompany them. The eyes of the delighted girl sparkled with joy, as she looked gratefully at Lady Hamilton, who smiled kindly at her; and, the business of the opera settled, the ladies rose to depart.

The carriage had scarcely driven from the door, when a travelling chaise drove up to it, laden with

portmanteaus, trunks, and bags, with two French servants outside.

“ The count ! the count !” exclaimed Louise, flying down the stairs to meet him.

“ It cannot possibly be the count,” said Lady Hamilton ; “ it was but this morning Lord Bransby received his letter, and he would scarcely have followed it so immediately. Louise is so excessively volatile — she should, at least, have waited to ascertain whether it is he or not.”

“ It is he, indeed, madam,” said Emily — “ and looking so well — so handsome — what a pity the Arlingtons are gone !”

“ Why a pity, my dear ?”

“ Oh ! because he is so great a favourite with Lady Arlington — ”

At this moment the young nobleman entered the room, leading in Louise, to whom he was talking with the utmost gaiety.

He was most affectionately welcomed by Lady Hamilton and Emily, the former of whom had acted the part of a mother to him from a very early age, while the latter regarded him as a beloved brother, and testified the most unfeigned pleasure at his return. The gay Louise then described a ludicrous scene that was passing in the hall between *messieurs les domestiques français*, and the porter and gentlemen in livery, who were all endeavouring to arrive at the knowledge of each other’s sentiments by raising their voices to a most unmusical pitch ; which confusion was not likely to be speedily terminated, as Monsieur Jaspin, Lionel’s *gentleman*, who generally acted as interpreter on these occasions, was not at home.

The Count De Léal, the eldest son of the Marquis P—, was born in Portugal; but, although a native of that degraded and unhappy country, he was free from the grovelling vices that disgrace so many of its subjects, even of the most exalted rank, and possessed all the noble and amiable qualities that adorn the people of more free and enlightened nations. His father had been educated in England, where his friendship with Lord Bransby commenced; but, on his return to Portugal, all correspondence between them ceased for several years, during which time the marquis married, and had several children, all of whom died in infancy, to the inexpressible grief of the father, who ardently desired to have a son. At length the marchioness gave birth to a more healthy and promising boy than any of those who had preceded him; and, as soon as the lady was able to travel, the marquis took her to Naples, hoping that the salubrity of that climate would restore her declining health, and preserve the life of his child.

The event fully answered his expectations, and he purchased a small estate near the Neapolitan capital, where he always passed a few months in every year; and it was during one of these annual sojourns that Lord Bransby, having occasion to visit that part of Italy, renewed his intimacy with his former friend.

The young Count de Léal was then a handsome boy about seven years of age, totally uninstructed, as every other consideration had yielded to that of his health, and he certainly was exceedingly strong

and vigorous for his age ; but his parents began to think it was high time to commence the arduous task of cultivating a mind that had hitherto been left to the guidance of nature, and they held frequent conversations with Lord Bransby on the subject.

Education was at a very low ebb in the boy's native country, and both gentlemen agreed that nothing could be so advantageous to him as a few years' residence in England ; Lord Bransby, therefore, with genuine warmth of heart, offered to take charge of the young count, until his education should be completed ; an offer that was most gratefully accepted. It was with much difficulty the marchioness was prevailed upon to part with her darling son ; for although she had two other boys and a girl to console her in his absence, he was the eldest, heir to the family honours, and moreover much handsomer than his brothers and sisters ; but she was a woman of strong sense ; she listened to, and reflected on, the advantages he would derive from an English education, and confided him to the care of the noble and worthy peer.

It was thus that the youthful count became a member of the family in Grosvenor-square, where he was a universal favourite. At this period he was nearly twenty years of age, and had completed his studies at the university ; but for some political reasons, his father wished him to continue in England some time longer, which arrangement was perfectly in unison with the young gentleman's own inclinations, for several reasons,

some of which he made public, and some he thought it quite sufficient for himself to know.

He made occasional visits to Paris, where his mother and sister now resided; for the marquis was an avowed enemy to the present tyrannical government of Portugal; in consequence of which, all the property he possessed in that kingdom had been confiscated, himself obliged to fly, and his family compelled to economize on what remained of his once princely fortune. But he lived on in the hope of restitution, should any happy change occur; and he placed much dependence on the future influence of his son, whose superior attainments gave him great advantages over his unenlightened countrymen.

To the solid basis of a good classical education, the Count de Léal joined all the brilliant accomplishments that make a finished gentleman; and these, with the advantages of an elegant figure, and prepossessing manners, secured his favourable reception in all fashionable circles.

Among those who had courted his society during the brilliant career of the Marquis P——, ere his possessions had been wrested from him by the hand of oppression, was Lady Arlington, who had spoken of and praised him on all occasions. But lately she had mentioned his name less frequently; not that she admired him less, but the change in his prospects had made a trifling alteration in her views, and she was rather more sparing of her commendation.

An accident, however, happened a short time before his last journey to Paris, which did more in

five minutes than whole years of her contrivances could have effected or undone. The count was one morning riding on horseback along Regent-street ; it was crowded with carriages ; when suddenly he observed an appearance of alarm among the pedestrians, some of whom, with looks of terror, were running into the shops, while others were screaming aloud, unable to move from affright ; he turned round to ascertain the cause of this general consternation, and perceived an infuriated ox making its way towards him. He was on the point of galloping off to avoid it, when his eye caught Lavinia Arlington, pale as death, and almost fainting, standing in the road, directly in the way of the enraged animal. She was unable to gain the pathway, from the number of carriages which were approaching when she imprudently attempted to cross the road, thinking her mamma and sister would follow ; but they, seeing the hazard, had stopped and called to her, which, not hearing, she was now in imminent danger, as much from the numerous vehicles, as from the wild animal that was now almost close to her. The count saw her peril, leaped from his horse, caught her in his arms, and forcing his way through the line of carriages, carried her safely into a shop, where Lady Arlington and Marian followed, in a state of agitation hardly to be described.

A flood of tears relieved the trembling Lavinia, who could not utter a word of thanks to her deliverer, but her eyes spoke all that she would have said, and made more impression on him than the loud, and reiterated expressions of gratitude poured

upon his ear from the other two ladies, who overwhelmed him with their thanks. His horse had been taken care of by some of the bystanders, and having seen the ladies safe to their carriage, which was waiting at the end of the street, he rode home, thinking of Lavinia Arlington.

CHAPTER VII.

“ I DESIRE, Lavinia,” said Lady Arlington, in continuation of a lecture that had already lasted above half an hour, “ that you will, for the future, conduct yourself in a more becoming manner, and not assume the airs of a woman, while you are yet a mere child. Both your sister and myself have, I am sorry to say, had frequent occasion to reprove you lately, for the same fault, which I hope you will amend. Nothing is more disagreeable than a forward child; and I expect that you will always content yourself with replying to any questions you may be favoured with, without presuming to offer an opinion, which, at your age, is perfectly absurd. It was certainly very kind in Lady Hamilton to ask you to go to the opera to-night; but it will be quite time enough in two years for you to appear in public places; and Marian thinks it highly improper; therefore I beg I may see no more ill temper about it.”

To the infinite relief of Lavinia, who was wearied almost to yawning, though she did not dare to indulge in this comfortable indication of ennui, the

entrance of her drawing-master terminated this tedious and oft-repeated sermon ; for, although she endeavoured as much as possible to occupy her mind with other and more interesting matter, the regular hum-drum tone in which a lecture is usually delivered, is in itself very annoying, independent of its substance, which is sure to be a complete antidote to pleasant thoughts.

“ Heigh ho !” sighed Lavinia, when her master was gone, and she was left for a time to the uninterrupted enjoyment of her own ruminations ; the pencil was still in her hand, and the drawing before her ; but her mind had wandered from the works of art to the works of nature ; and the train of thought proceeded in something like the following order.

“ So, I am not to go to the Opera. I wonder when I am to be released from this dull school-room ; — at my age, to be treated as a mere baby, is beyond all endurance. But I can see the reason of it all ; and if mamma thinks this is to continue till Marian is married, she is very much mistaken. I might as well go into a nunnery at once, for nobody will ever have her ; and I am determined not to be kept in confinement much longer ; — two years time enough for me to appear ! — two years ! and perhaps by that time the Count — but he shall not think me such a bashful, awkward, overgrown miss as I must now appear to him ; and I am resolved, in spite of Marian’s excellent management, to find some means of undeceiving him. I wonder when he will return from Paris ; I may, perhaps, by some happy chance, soon see him again ; ” and here she fell into a deeper reverie, in which every word and look of the count was recalled and dwelt

upon, when he gallantly rescued her from an extremely perilous situation.

A summons from Lady Arlington at length interrupted these meditations, and her heart beat quicker, on being informed that Lady Hamilton and the Count de Léal were in the drawing-room. The hasty glance at the mirror was satisfactory, and, with a light step, she descended the stairs ; but not all her efforts to appear indifferent, nor the fear of Marian's displeasure, could prevent the colour from rising to her forehead, as she returned the salutation of the count. Trembling and hesitating, she approached Lady Hamilton, who held out her hand, and pitying her extreme confusion, said, in the kindest tone —

“ My dear Lavinia, how well you are looking this morning ; study does not spoil your complexion.”

Lavinia curtsied, and was silent.

“ Lavinia ! can’t you answer when you are spoken to ?” said Marian, sharply.

Lavinia looked confused, and did not know what she might venture to say ; or rather, she feared, in replying, she might say too much, and thereby draw upon herself another sermon, from the same text as the last ; when Lady Hamilton, to relieve her embarrassment asked if she had been out that morning.”

“ No, ma’am.”

“ I suppose your mornings are generally devoted to your studies ?”

“ Yes ma’am.”

“ Pray, Senhor Comte, is there anything new in Paris ?” said Miss Arlington.

“ If you mean in the fashions,” replied the count, “ you could not apply to any one more unlearned. I know when ladies look well ; but as to colours and shapes, I can give you no information.”

“ I was not alluding to dress,” said the lady, disdainfully ; I meant anything new in the literary world ?”

“ *Pardonnez, mademoiselle* ; indeed, I am almost ashamed to confess, that I have been quite in the *other world* during my last *séjour à Paris* ; my time has been devoted more to pleasure than improvement ; and the hours spent at the Opera and *à faire des promenades* left me but few for more profound studies.”

“ I understand,” continued Marian, “ there is a new *Revue Politique* ; and an excellent work, entitled *Les deux Indes* !”

“ *Qu'il est mortifiant d'être obligé de confesser son ignorance !* ” said the count, laughing ; and walking to the piano-forte, he began to turn over the leaves of a music-book, on which was the name of Lavinia. It contained some of Herz’s most difficult concertos, which convinced him she must be a performer of no ordinary merit. He opened a folio of drawings, some of which were in a finished style, and displayed considerable taste and talent.

“ Are these your performances !” he asked, turning to Marian.

“ Oh ! dear no,” she replied coldly ; “ drawing is a very pretty amusement, like all other light accomplishments ; but, for my own part, I prefer more intellectual studies ; pursuits that supply the mind with subjects for rational conversation.”

“ They are then yours ?” said the count, looking at Lavinia with delighted surprise.

“ Yes, sir ;” and poor Lavinia dared not utter another syllable, though she would have given worlds to have entered into conversation with him on the subject of drawing ; not for the purpose of displaying her knowledge of the fine arts, with which she was better acquainted than most young ladies of her age ; but to convince the count that she could say more than yes and no, of which he might, at present, entertain some doubt ; for these were the only replies he could elicit to the various questions he addressed to her.

“ What a pity !” thought he, “ that with so much beauty and such accomplishments, she should be so inanimate. Yet there is something in her eye that tells me she is not really so ; perhaps it is only an excess of timidity ; perhaps it is a restraint imposed upon her ;” and he was willing to attribute it to anything rather than a defective intellect.

In the mean time, the subject of this mental soliloquy had, from the conversation of the two elder ladies, discovered, with suppressed delight, that she was to go to the opera, according to the former arrangement, which had been set aside by the interference of Marian, who had a decided objection to let her sister be seen anywhere ; and it was partly from a suspicion that this might be the case, Lady Hamilton had been induced to call, in order to save Lavinia from so great a disappointment.

To the uninitiated in the paths of pleasure, a trifling enjoyment is a bliss more than equal to the higher felicities obtained by those who, cloyed with

delights have lost the relish for them. No sensation is so exquisite as unexpected pleasure; this observation was fully illustrated by the happy girl, to whom the anticipated joy of the evening was as the oasis of the desert to the zealous pilgrim — one of the stages that conducted her to the shrine of her adoration.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE honourable Augustus Clayton, who was not only suspected of being, but who actually was, the gentleman in search of matrimonial felicity, had wound himself up to the proper degree of sentimentality before he opened the letter written by Louise, appointing a meeting in Grosvenor-square, at one o'clock on the following morning.

But this was not the only reply, nor the most flattering one, that he received ; and he began seriously to ruminata upon the most advantageous manner of disposing of himself, when suddenly the bright idea struck him that he would grant an interview to each of the fair correspondents, and then make his election. Accordingly, after more than usual adornment of the outward man,—“ For,” said Augustus, “ Byron says truly, ‘ Maidens, like moths, are ever caught by glare :’ ” he deliberately walked forth from his repository in Pall Mall, and took his way towards Grosvenor-square, with mind wholly intent on selecting certain quotations, pre-determined that the conversation should afford him an opportunity of introducing them with great effect.

All his arrangements made, Mr. Augustus Clayton arrived at the place of rendezvous exactly at the appointed time.

“By heaven! she comes,” he exclaimed, perceiving a female leading, by a scarlet ribbon, a little white dog, the signal intimated, and he quickened his pace.

Whether the enthusiastic gentleman’s glasses were defective in aiding his vision,—whether any other glasses had mystified his optical powers; certain it is that he came too near the lady to avoid being recognized before he discovered who she was. Quite unprepared for so cruel a surprize, he could not immediately resolve how to act, and stammered out something about the weather, the Englishman’s never-failing resource on all embarrassing occasions.

Much to his astonishment, as well as gratification, Miss Moreland replied with an air of indifference, and evidently was as anxious to escape from his society, as he from hers. He, therefore, after perpetrating a few common-place civilities, made what he considered a masterly retreat, felicitating himself that his secret was safe in his own keeping; little imagining that the mischievous authoress of the plot was a witness of its success; and she afterwards declared that the unfortunate hero’s start of horror at the *rencontre*, was one of the finest things ever seen.

Poor Augustus, however, consoled himself for the disappointment he had just experienced, by indulging in the blissful anticipation, that in his other correspondent he should meet with a first-rate heroine: he perused once more the hope-inspiring

lines, whose balmy influence restored his mind to its usual equilibrium, ruffled as it had been by this untoward adventure.

The letter ran thus.

“ To MONTAGU.

“ Perhaps I shall be called imprudent by the illiberal and unfeeling world, for thus addressing an unknown ; but where is the heart, glowing with sensibility, that would not have been charmed by the elegant sentiments of him who has thus led me to overstep the bounds of decorum ; but I trust that the soul of Montagu is above all vulgar prejudices, and in this hope I defy the opinion of the world, and glory in placing the happiness of my future life in his keeping. I have long sought, but never yet met with, one worthy to possess my hand and fortune ; in you I think I have found that one, and if the prepossession should be mutual, why should malice prevent us from being blessed ? Riches cannot secure happiness to the tender heart, which is susceptible to the refined sentiments of love ; and without a beloved companion to share them, they are but mere dross ; and proud indeed should I be to bestow my fortune on one who is doubtless superior to the common horde. I feel rather agitated at proposing an interview, but if you wish to see me, I will be in my carriage, at the door of the Colosseum, to-morrow at five o’clock. The carriage is green, and the liveries dark brown : say to the servant that your name is Delacour, and you wish to see his lady. Anxiously awaiting, yet dreading the meeting, believe me — trembling with timidity,

“ Your faithful ARAMINTA.”

This elegant specimen of epistolary eloquence did not emanate entirely from the brain of the lovely scribe; she had searched several books for materials wherewithal to compound the same, and if the sentences were not strung together exactly according to the rules set forth by Lindley Murray and his learned fraternity, they sounded exceedingly well in the ears of Augustus Clayton, particularly the words *carriage* and *fortune*, which were in themselves sufficient inducements to lure him to the appointed spot.

The systematic lover allowed himself sufficient time to perform the journey from Pall Mall to the Regent's Park, without endangering the tranquillity of his nerves by unwonted hurry. Unmindful of the passing throng, he pursued his way, beguiling the distance by studying his part, and in the more retired streets embellishing the same by a little action.

Precisely at the hour of five, the measured step of Augustus was heard in front of the Colosseum. He had scarcely reached the gate, ere a carriage answering the description given, drove up, the footman jumped from behind, and on hearing the name of Delacour, opened the door, and the expectant lover, ere he had time to look around him, found himself seated by a lady. The ready quotation was hovering on his tongue, ready to burst forth at the first word that should issue from the lips of his incognita; but what pen is strong enough — what ink is black enough, to describe his utter dismay; when, from behind the thick veil that shrouded her face, he heard the shrill, the

well-known voice that was but too familiar to his agonized ear—

“ Oh ! merciful goodness ! Mr. Clayton, is it you ? Who could have thought of this ? ”

Retreating is said to be the most difficult portion of the art of war ; but, in the present case, Augustus proved himself a general of the first order. Not Charles the Twelfth from Pultawa, Xerxes from Salamis, or Demosthenes from Platea, displayed more activity in their several exits, than did the ill-fated votary of Cupid.

Not a moment was now devoted to the study of the part he should perform — the carriage door flew open, and the grinning footmen with difficulty kept their mirth within the limits of decorum, after the horror-struck hero had vanished from their sight : nor was it till he was sure that several streets intervened between himself and the form, which, like the old man of the sea, appeared destined to cling round his neck for life, that the unfortunate sentimentalist ventured to slacken the velocity of his motion ; and even then he looked cautiously around, as if fearful of a pursuit, and ready to start again, at the least sign of the enemy’s approach.

In the mean time Miss Moreland, petrified at the *éclaircissement*, and the flight of her lover, sat in all the rigidity of astonishment, looking not much dissimilar to an antique statue, and utterly regardless of the reiterated question of “ Where to, ma’am ? ”

At length the interrogator, who had himself an assignation with a fair nursery-maid in the vicinity,

which a longer delay would interfere with ; after an interval of some sixty seconds, suddenly shut the door of the carriage, and pretending to hear the word “home,” favoured the coachman with a sign, which that honest Phaeton, who had taken nothing but a slight lunch since his coffee at twelve, willingly understood ; and the disappointed damsels found herself at the door of her domicile, ere she had recovered from the first shock of amazement.

CHAPTER IX.

THE first act of the opera was nearly over when Lady Arlington and her daughters entered the box where Lady Hamilton and her party were already seated. Marian was fashionably attired ; but not all the efforts of art could give either grace to her figure or charms to her countenance ; adornment only served to render her want of beauty still more conspicuous. Lavinia, on the contrary, though dressed with all the simplicity of a child of ten years old, lost none of her native graces by the absence of ornament ; loveliness may be rendered more striking by the aid of fashion, but it cannot be concealed, even by the humblest guise ; and the sweet Lavinia, in her plain white dress, and her blooming cheeks, half hidden by the ringlets that had never yet been tied and twisted, and *crêpé* by the hand of any professor of that high branch of the arts, was infinitely more attractive than her sister, notwithstanding the feathers that drooped far below her waist, and the diamonds that sparkled on her thin brown neck.

The effect of a splendid theatre on one who, far

advanced beyond the age of childhood, enters it for the first time, must be very imposing ; and our novice, had she dared to express her feelings, would have afforded an interesting proof of the pleasurable sensations such a situation must naturally excite ; but she had been so lectured and relectured during the day, both by mother and sister, that even a look of admiration or delight was more than she dared to indulge in.

Often was she on the point of exclaiming, “ How beautiful ! ” but the suspicious glance of Marian, who feared that some such sudden impulse might lead her into an involuntary display of sensibility, checked the joyous emotion, and forced it back to her heart.

In a high degree susceptible to the power of harmony, she would have yielded to its influence, and suffered her whole soul to be engrossed by its charm ; but the efforts she was compelled continually to make, that the varying emotions she experienced might not exhibit themselves on her countenance, marred the delight. Mingled with the music came the shrill voice of Marian, as it had rung the whole day in her ears ; and at every look of reproof darted towards her, she still seemed to hear these words :—“ Now, Lavinia, pray do not affect a vast deal of sentiment and feeling to-night ; it is so, plebeian ; I shall be perfectly ashamed if you do : you must appear quite indifferent, and not stare about you like the country-people, who come up to London to see sights.”

Thus tutored, poor Lavinia endeavoured to confine her thoughts to her own bosom ; and the Bransbys, who had seen her but seldom, really

supposed her as childish and inanimate as she appeared to be.

The count, who had hoped that this evening would afford him an opportunity of conversing with her, whose loveliness had already charmed him, and of whose mind he had formed an estimate from his own wishes, was surprised and disappointed at the apparent coldness with which she listened to a very fine opera, although he was well aware it was the first she had ever heard, and had watched with some interest, its effect upon her. At the conclusion of the second act, he ventured to ask her opinion of it ; but perceiving the eye of her mamma upon her, and recollecting this injunction — “ I desire, Lavinia, you will not presume to give an opinion ” — she merely replied, that she liked it very much. Again he tried, by making general observations on the singers, on the house, on the company — on anything to draw her into something like conversation ; but all in vain : a monosyllable, or a brief sentence, was all he could obtain in return for his anxious efforts. Still he was unwilling to relinquish the endeavour as hopeless ; and he continued, at intervals, to address remarks, and questions to her, with looks and tones, whose gentleness made more impression on her heart than she would have wished him to suspect.

Anxiously did Lavinia watch for some opportunity, when, by being unobserved, she might speak with rather less restraint, and she did not watch in vain. The fortunate moment came — Lady Arlington and Marian were both intently engaged in making inquiries of Lady Hamilton about some lady in an opposite box ; and so earnestly was their

attention fixed upon the individual in question, that Lavinia was, for the moment, forgotten. The count again leaned forward. "Why will you not talk to me?" said he, in a whisper; "is it that my importunity offends you?"

"Offends me! oh! no, indeed; but I am not at liberty to say all I think and feel; I am compelled to be silent — neither my words nor actions are free." Then, seeing that Marian was no longer engaged, she was again silent; but these few words had conveyed enough to the count to satisfy him that she was not devoid of intellect.

Lavinia, when the excitement of the moment was over, began to fear she had said too much; yet she could not repent of having made the count aware of the *espionage* she was under.

Her spirits were more elastic, her heart lighter, and she found it difficult to conceal the satisfaction that glowed in her cheek, and beamed from her intelligent eye; while he, comprehending at once the real state of the case, resolved, like a true knight of romance, to be desperately in love from that moment.

In the mean time Louise was amusing herself by watching Sir Charles Freemantle, who, in a mournful mood, was leaning against the side of a box. Anxiously did he watch the flash of every beaming eye, the movement of every graceful neck; not a female hand raised her glass, but the action, like an electric shock, startled him, and drew his eager glance towards her who he hoped might be his *incognita*.

But, alas! bright eyes sparkled, necks of alabaster fairness turned in the pride of their beauty

— white-gloved hands and taper fingers were elevated — but not a sign, not a token of the most remote recognition was given, to repay the angry baronet for his obedient attendance.

The performance closed — the house gradually cleared ; and, in a temper most unenviable to his equals, and exceedingly annoying to his attendants, Sir Charles sought his nightly repose, which was embellished with visions of flaxen ringlets, azure eyes, and several other *et-ceteras* which had disturbed his waking fancy, and now assumed a thousand fantastic shapes, the disembodied tormentors of his restless sleep.

On descending to breakfast in the morning, hope received a balm, and pride a wound, from the following laconic epistle which graced the table.

“ To Sir Charles Freemantle.

For heaven’s sake ! never go to the opera again with that tragedy face ; it made me quite melancholy to look at you.

“ CONSTANTIA.”

“ This is beyond all bearing !” said he, pettishly tossing the note to Dufforth ! “ What a fool I was to go and make an exhibition of myself for a whole evening, to be laughed at by half the coxcombs in the house perhaps.”

“ Very likely,” said Dufforth, laughing ; “ but then you have the consolation of knowing that the lady did not laugh at you, for she declares unequivocally, that the sight of you made her quite melancholy.”

Sir Charles walked up and down the room, out

of humour with all the world, and alternately blaming himself for being such a dupe, and Duforth for encouraging him in his folly — and ended by declaring that he would return to Myrtlewood the next day.

“ What ! not stay for the races ?”

“ I’ll stay for nothing ; I have only remained thus long to make myself ridiculous.”

“ A clear case ; but, as the mischief is done, it cannot be undone by a precipitate retreat ; therefore you may as well stay for Epsom. And as to this foolish affair, that you make such a serious business of, pray act with a little more spirit. You are too tame by half : if you really wish to know who the girl is, insist upon coming to an understanding ; and if she refuses, threaten to break off entirely : you have no courage, man : if it had been my case, I would have found her out long ago.”

Sir Charles took this advice into consideration, and the result of his deliberations was a resolution to insert the following paragraph in the ‘ Morning Post :’ —

“ I begin to suspect you are trifling with me ; if so, our correspondence had better cease. The only way to convince me of your sincerity is to make yourself known immediately. C. F.”

Hoping much from this doughty menace, he impatiently awaited an answer to it. It came,—and brought with it a fresh supply of despondency and regret. These were the contents : —

“ It is impossible to comply with your demand,

which is made in too peremptory a manner ; therefore, since you desire it, our correspondence shall cease, — *coute qu'il coute.* CONSTANTIA."

Sir Charles, like the poor man in *Æsop*, who called on Death, and shuddered when the call was answered, felt that this compliance with his own request, had given him anything rather than gratification. One comfort, (and this we generally find a great one, in our distresses,) was, that the measure which had been productive of such unpleasant consequences, was not one of his own proposition ; and he therefore could have the satisfaction of reproaching his friend Dufforth, but for whose impolitic advice he considered that he might still have had the pleasure of pursuing a shadow ; while now, neither shadow nor substance remained to cheer him with a ray of hope, that it might lead to an elucidation of the mystery.

Paragraph after paragraph did Sir Charles insert in the 'Morning Post,' much to the benefit of the quarter's revenue, and the advertisement department of that journal, but without producing a single line in reply from his tormenter.

CHAPTER X.

ON the second day of the races, Epsom was, as usual, the loadstone that drew unto itself all the vehicles, of every description, within the extensive sphere of its attraction.

From the splendid equipage of the royal duke, to the poney-chaise of the retired small tradesman, everything moving on four or two wheels, rolled on towards the same point. Many a youth mounted a steed, who had never before mounted anything but a shop-board or a counter: and in consequence of this fatal inexperience, great was the display of *dismounted equestrians* on the course.

Lady Hamilton had gone with the Arlingtons, in order to make room in the carriage for Lord Bransby, who would not consent to go on any other condition; — Lionel and the Count De Léal rode on horseback.

As soon as Lady Arlington's carriage arrived on the course, the count set off, at full gallop, to meet it; but his hopes and expectations were disappointed. Lavinia was left at home; and he re-

joined his party with such a disconcerted air, that Louise immediately perceived it.

“ What is the matter, Monsieur le Comte ?
que vous avez l'air triste !”

“ It is, mademoiselle, to distinguish myself from the rest of the world, *qui a l'air si gai.*”

“ A species of vanity delightfully *récherchée* ; but every quality of Monsieur le Comte is *tout à fait à lui.*”

“ The compliment is equivocal,” said the count, smiling.—“ Pray, Emily, how may I interpret it ?”

“ When a compliment admits of more than one interpretation, I always take that which pleases me the best,” replied Emily.

“ May I do so ?” said he, turning to Louise.

“ Oh ! just as you please ; but, in the mean time, pray desire John to order some ices, or lemonade.”

“ Are you wishing for ice, Miss Bransby ?” said the Duke of Belltown, who had just ridden up to them ; “ you have but to express your desires, and they are fulfilled : here am I, a monument of ice, frozen by your cold looks.”

“ I thought it was my heart, and not my eyes, that was so cold.”

“ Oh ! your heart — it is a perfect icicle.”

“ Then I'm sure it must melt to-day.”

“ How much I envy the sun that has the power of melting it.”

“ I am afraid I feel it going !” said Louise, laughing, “ and I shall expect, presently, to hear of your elopement.”

“ My elopement !”

“ Yes, certainly—for, if you are really metamorphosed into ice, and the sun continues to shine so warmly upon you, you will certainly run away.”

“ Then I shall run away with your heart—so I am content.”

The ices now made their appearance, and the ringing of the bell drew the attention of the gentlemen another way.

There is something very animating in a race, even to an unconcerned spectator. The excitement that appears on every face, shews the lively and general interest inspired by the scene.

“ Six pair of gloves on Blue-cap!” said Louise; the count accepted the wager, and galloped off with the rest, who crowded towards the stand, waiting, with eagerness, the coming in of the horses.

“ A dead heat! a dead heat!” resounded from all quarters; the concourse of spectators that had gathered around the stand to witness the event of the race, were dispersing, when a sudden confusion, and a rush towards one particular spot, gave intimation that some accident had happened.

“ He is killed! he is certainly dead! Oh! how dreadful!” were the exclamations of those who were near; while others, at a greater distance from the scene of action, assailed every one who passed, with, “ What is the matter? For God’s sake, what has occurred? Who is killed?” &c.

At length, mingled with the various other tones the name of Sir Charles Freemantle was distinctly heard. Poor Louise grasped Emily’s hand, and trembled so violently, she could scarcely support herself; but the attention of every one was so en-

tirely directed towards the place where the accident had happened, that her excessive emotion was unobserved by any one but Emily, who knew the cause of it, and was, herself, scarcely less agitated.

In breathless anxiety they awaited the return of a servant whom they had sent to learn the particulars; but, before he had executed his mission, Lionel Bransby appeared with the intelligence that Sir Charles Freemantle had been thrown from his horse, and taken up apparently lifeless; that a surgeon, whose immediate attendance had been procured, had bled him, which had restored animation; but it was ascertained that the baronet had broken an arm, and was otherwise seriously injured.

As all happiness is by comparison, so is all misery; and a misfortune that would have appeared great indeed, had no greater been anticipated, became a mere trifle, falling thus short of what had been dreaded. Louise, relieved from her first painful fears, felt the colour return to her cheek and the warmth to her heart; assured that he still lived, she was grateful and happy.

Lord Bransby sent Lionel with an offer of the carriage to convey the unfortunate young man to the nearest inn, which kind proposal was gratefully accepted by Major Dufforth, who was greatly distressed by the occurrence. All the ladies immediately alighted, and Sir Charles, faint from the effects of pain and loss of blood, was carefully placed in it, and, accompanied by the major and the surgeon, was conveyed slowly, and with great caution, to an inn; Lionel followed, anxious to

learn whether the consequences were likely to be attended with danger, and also to render any assistance in his power during the operation of setting the broken limb.

Although Louise had recovered, in some measure, from the shock her spirits had received, she could not regain her wonted animation; indeed a gloom had overspread the whole party — no one seemed inclined to converse; and even the duke, who was generally gifted with sufficient loquacity, was silent; not from depression of spirits, for he possessed that happy equanimity which is seldom disturbed, especially by the misfortunes of *others*, whatever effect his own distresses might have upon him: but his unusual taciturnity arose from ill humour, at the concern Louise had shown for Sir Charles Freemantle.

Matters were in this position, when Mr. de Tracey, who perceived the Bransbys walking on the course, alighted from his horse and joined them.

The conversation naturally turned upon the late accident, and he expressed his regret in general terms; but his object was to gain a few moments conference with Lady Caroline Gresham, which he easily effected.

“ I came here to meet you” —he said, “ have you considered what I said to you at our last interview —and are you prepared to give me the confidence I then solicited?”

“ I cannot, Mr. De Tracey —indeed I cannot —the more I reflect, the less it appears possible to act as you desire.”

“ Why is it not possible? what is it you fear?”

“ I fear I should be doing that which I could not justify either to myself or to others.”

“ And to whom must you render an account of your conduct? Is there any one who will dare to require it?”

“ Perhaps not—but is that a reason why I should do what my own heart disapproves?”

You are right—I cannot, I ought not to blame your hesitation.—Yet you must be saved. How shall I teach you to confide in me? It is not by assuring you of my sincerity—words are no security for good faith; they are oftener used, like the kiss of Judas, alas! only to betray. I, therefore, claim your confidence upon stronger grounds; you can sustain no injury by the trust you may repose in me, therefore policy alone should induce your acquiescence; but more than this, I swear to you that it is my actual right, and on this plea, I demand it.”

“ Good heavens! will you never be more explicit? will you never cease to rack my brain with this torturing suspense?—Why this mystery—why not at once explain the reasons for which you would obtain so much influence over my actions, and whence arises the power you claim?”

This is neither a time nor place for explanation; but be assured, it shall not be delayed longer than circumstances require concealment. I shall see you now more frequently; for the time is arrived when I must cease to indulge in loneliness, and mix again with a world I hate, and from which I have secluded myself for many years. It is not for myself I do this, but for those who are infinitely dearer

to me than my own existence. My actions will appear inconsistent to the world at large ; but, as I desire not its approbation, so I spurn its animadversions. My own heart is the only judge of my conduct, to whose dictates I will bow—but I forget that I am making reflections which must, as yet, be incomprehensible to you : forgive me for thus untrammeling your mind, and believe that I do so, only to secure its lasting peace.”

The carriage had now returned, and the ladies immediately prepared to depart for town. De Tracey remounted his horse, and was soon out of sight.

Lionel had sent a note to his father saying, that he should remain till the evening with the baronet, who was declared to be going on favourably. The fever naturally attendant upon such a casualty was slight, and threatened no danger ; and a temporary confinement to his room was all the inconvenience to be apprehended.

Sir Charles was gratefully sensible of the kind and friendly attentions of Lionel, and was earnest in his request, that the latter would relieve the tedium of sickness by occasional visits, while the effects of his accident should detain him at Epsom. Indeed, there seemed to be a reciprocity of friendly feeling established between the young gentlemen, and, in consequence, as may be imagined, the promise was readily given.

CHAPTER XI.

ON the following morning the important news reached Lord Bransby that the anxiously expected vessel from India had been spoken with, within two days' sail of land. This was joyful intelligence to his lordship, who had anticipated, with sensations of pleasure that brought back to his memory the delights of former years, the return of his earliest and dearest friend to his native country, after an absence of more than twenty years. The expectations of the younger branches of the family were no less delightful, for the General was accompanied by a young native Indian, his nephew, of whom report spoke very favourably; and curiosity was on tiptoe to behold this interesting oriental importation.

Lord Bransby made immediate preparations for a journey to Falmouth, that he might be ready to greet his friends on their landing, and he therefore left town that morning, expecting that the ship would probably have arrived by the time he reached that port.

About an hour after his departure, a carriage

drove furiously up to the door, and Lady Arlington with her daughter, apparently in great haste, made their appearance in the drawing-room.

“ My dear Lady Hamilton,” said her ladyship, “ we have made all possible haste to arrive in time, before Lord Bransby sets off. I understand he is going to meet the *Minerva* at Falmouth. Do you know I have just been informed my son Robert is on board. We had not the slightest idea he was coming to England, and are frightened to death that he will bring some of his boisterous companions home with him ; and really, if they are once introduced, there is no such thing as getting rid of them again ; and I wish to send this letter, with my positive commands that he will come alone.”

On being informed that Lord Bransby had already departed, Miss Arlington expressed her disappointment and regret, with a countenance the very antipodes of mild and amiable. Captain Arlington was her only brother ; he had been absent five years, and the feeling with which she welcomed his return was a fear that her quiet would be disturbed, and that he would occasion the expenditure of a few more guineas than were generally disposed of in the ordinary course of the family disbursements.

“ How delighted you must feel at his arrival,” said Louise — “ much more so than if you had expected him.”

“ Oh ! not at all,” replied Marian. “ I quite dread his coming ; he keeps the house in a perpetual state of confusion ; there is no peace while he is at home. I anticipate at least a month’s headache ; and as to Lavinia, I expect the child’s brain will be quite turned.”

Lady Arlington, who was not quite destitute of maternal affection, was divided between the joy she felt at the prospect of again seeing her only son, after so long a separation from him, and her fears for the safety of her purse, which already felt lighter by anticipation ; for the captain was thoughtless and extravagant : but there was so much liberality and good-nature in his composition, that he was generally looked upon as one of the best fellows in the world ; but he had one fault which your “ very good fellow ” is never without, and which his mamma would willingly have dispensed with in her son and heir—namely, a propensity, whenever he visited England, to figure in the folio volumes of certain tailors, boot-makers, hatters, and other artists of the same description, whose several claims he invariably forgot to discharge previous to his departure ; and his mother, for the credit of the family, most reluctantly paid the bills that regularly made their appearance after Captain Arlington had made his exit.

Yet, notwithstanding her dread of a repetition of these grievances, Lady Arlington expressed something like satisfaction at his unexpected visit ; but Marian, the selfish, insensible Marian, thought of nothing but her own personal inconvenience ; besides which, she had some fears that her brother, finding Lavinia, who was a mere child when he last saw her, transformed into a beautiful young woman, for she could not conceal from herself this truth, would insist upon introducing her more into society ; than which nothing could be more unpleasant to Marian’s ideas. She therefore vented her spleen in ill-natured comments upon the extravagancies

and enormities that Robert was likely to be guilty of; and did not scruple to say that it would have given her much more pleasure to hear that he was at Madras than Falmouth.

“Cold-hearted! thankless girl!” thought Emily; “had I a brother, with what different feelings should I greet his return. What a pity that such inestimable blessings should be bestowed on those who value them so little.”

“I am glad,” said Louise, as soon as the Arlingtons were gone, “that papa had set off before they came; they are never easy but when they are employing people to carry their letters and messages, asking for franks, and begging for people to whom they never give any thing themselves, but trouble, which, to do them justice, they are extremely liberal of. I should be delighted to hear that the captain had invited half a dozen of the officers to dine with him every day — how doleful her ladyship would look at the cook as she issued her daily orders: but I plainly perceive that Marian’s shoe feels tight in another place; — she has some misgivings that she shall no longer be able to keep poor Lavinia in the nursery; and I sincerely hope it will be so — for I do verily believe the girl is clever enough, only she is afraid to open her mouth; but I will invite her here upon every occasion, and give the captain a hint.”

“You will be doing very wrong, my dear,” said Lady Hamilton, “and I must request that you will never interfere with the arrangements of any family, however ill they may accord with your ideas of propriety.”

Louise made no reply—but she had made her own little family arrangements with the Count de Léal; which, in all probability, would be greatly facilitated by the opportune arrival of the gallant officer.

CHAPTER XII.

“ HUZZA ! huzza ! Land ! land ! Huzza ! !”

It was the glad shouting of the long exiled mariner, as he once again saw rise, as though from the ocean, the white cliffs of his native shore. The deck of the *Minerva* was instantly crowded with the passengers, whose rejoicing, though less boisterous, was equally sincere with that of the now half-frantic sailors.

Of those who had so long been captives in the floating dungeons of the Indiaman, but two there were, who did not rush forward with the mass to gladden their eyes with a sight of the land to which they were bound; and even their cabin echoed with the sounds of joy, which grew louder and louder.

“ Osselin,” said the elder, to a remarkably fine young man, apparently about twenty, “ do go upon deck, and learn the meaning of all this tumult.”

His companion left the cabin, and returned, in a few moments, with the welcome intelligence, that the ship was approaching the shores of England.

“ Thank God ! ” exclaimed the first speaker, in a more energetic tone than he had used for some weeks past. He was an old man of a sallow complexion, whose hollow voice, and sunken eye, gave evident tokens that he was in the last stage of that disease which is so frequently the effect of the torrid zone upon an European constitution.

The tall, elegant Indian, who had again seated himself by his side, anxiously watched every look and movement of his dying uncle. He placed another pillow under his head, spread a still warmer covering over him, and, finding that he was inclined to converse, laid aside a book from which he had been reading aloud.

In the meantime, the passengers on deck were endeavouring to gain a more distinct view of the shore by the aid of telescopes ; for they were yet at so great a distance, that it was a matter of doubt to some, whether the indistinct line that appeared along the horizon was really land, but the sailors were too well experienced to feel any uncertainty on the subject.

When, however, all scepticism was at an end, it was curious to observe the instantaneous change that had taken place in the vessel. Animation had succeeded to ennui, activity to listlessness ; the dull and half-opened eye again sparkled ; and the new life of expectation, instilled into the heart, spoke in every countenance. It seemed as though the seal of silence imposed by that wearying want of change, had been taken off, and conversation, so long impeded, broke forth, as the voyagers approached their haven, with a freedom and spirit not displayed for many weeks.

“ Thank God !” again ejaculated the invalid, “ I shall at least be spared to see my native country once again.”

“ And to live in it many happy years yet, dear sir,” returned the young man, pressing his hand affectionately, while a tear glistened in his fine eyes, the spontaneous offspring of a fear that his prediction would never be accomplished.

“ My beloved Osselin ! my good, my kind boy ! God will bless you for your dutiful attention to a poor, worn-out old man — I have been a constant trouble to you during this tedious voyage.”

“ Dearest uncle, say not so ; I can never repay you for the kindness you have bestowed on me : what should I have been without you ? and what shall I now be if I lose you, my best and only friend ?”

“ I trust you will soon find other friends to supply my place ; for I feel, my son, that the days of my life are numbered, and that my sojourning with you will be brief indeed.”

“ I have brighter hopes,” said Osselin, in as cheerful a voice as he could assume ; “ this long voyage once ended, quiet and your native air will speedily restore your health, and make us happy.”

The old man smiled, as he gazed on the handsome and dignified features of his nephew, animated with a warmth of affection that carried joy to his heart : and soothed by his watchful attentions, he soon fell into a calm slumber.

In the meanwhile, the stately Minerva was advancing steadily with a light breeze towards the smiling coast of Albion. The sea was slightly agitated, and sparkling beneath the rays of the noon-

day sun, who, in his golden grandeur, rolled along the unclouded sky.

At length the ship cast anchor in sight of Falmouth, to give all those who desired it an opportunity of landing.

The anxiety to set foot on terra firma, after this long and perilous voyage, is generally so great that very few choose to go farther than the first port; and, on the present occasion, many prepared to accompany the purser, who, with his despatches, was about to be put on shore forthwith.

All the passengers, except the two we have mentioned, were on deck.

“ Why Talbot! what the devil’s the matter with you? you look as dismal as you did on that memorable day when we all expected to go to the bottom, and

“ —— our fairy home to be
In the deep, deep sea; in the deep, deep sea.”

“ Let him alone, Arlington,” said Sellwood; he has got a touch of the sentimentals, that will break forth in an ‘ode to my native land,’ bye and bye.”

“ Egad! so I think it will; did you not hear him soliloquizing this morning, ‘ my native land, once more, I tread.’ What’s a good rhyme for tread?”

“ What a cursed unfeeling dog you are,” said Sellwood; “ there’s not a spark of sublimity about you; upon my soul! if you don’t soften, when we get to London, I shall cut.”

“ Aye, that’s right; always resign when you’re likely to be turned out. But, I say, instead of cutting one another, suppose we unite our forces to

turn adrift the sentimentalist : he'll be a confounded bore if he turns poet — see how theatrically he leans over the vessel's side ! ”

“ Leans over the side ! 'Gad one would think we were just putting out to sea, instead of coming into port.”

“ Oh ! the effect is exactly the same ; a trifling difference in the nature of the indisposition ; at going out, he was sea-sick ; on coming home, he is love-sick ; that's all.”

Lieutenant Talbot had received this volley with perfect good-humour, and, with Arlington, kindly proffered his services to the anxious Indian to assist him in conveying the invalid from the ship, which offer he thankfully accepted ; for he had contemplated, with much uneasiness, the difficulty and danger of the exertion to his uncle, how carefully soever he might be removed.

Wrapped in a large flannel dressing-gown, the old man was supported to the deck ; but, although it was one of the warmest days with which we are generally favoured in this cold clime of ours, he experienced a death-like chill on quitting the cabin, which he had not left for some weeks before.

“ Dont alarm yourself, Mr. Vassor,” said Talbot, “ the General is very weak from long confinement ; we must get him to bed as quickly as possible ; — there, my dear fellow, leave it to us ; we are more able to take care of him than you are, just now,” which was, indeed, the fact ; for Osselin, who had never before witnessed this kind of suffering, was so agitated at the aguish fit that had seized his uncle, that he was incapable of rendering the least assistance.

The surgeon of the ship, who was already gone on shore, had undertaken to provide a conveyance for the general, and accordingly, an easy chair on wheels, kept purposely for the accommodation of those who were too much debilitated to bear the more violent motion of a carriage, had been sent down from the inn, and was waiting on the quay, to receive him on his landing.

It was but a short distance to the inn, and on their arrival several persons were in attendance, with obsequious looks, expecting the coming of the strangers, the fame of whose wealth had already reached them — a sure guarantee for the politeness of innkeepers; and Osselin was informed that Lord Bransby had been awaiting their arrival since the preceding day.

He was giving a message to be delivered to him immediately, when a confused murmur, among those who surrounded the general's chair, drew his attention. The people of the inn, who had been in readiness to carry the poor old gentleman into the house, on removing the wrapper that covered his face, saw, at the first glance, that he was dead.

He had, indeed, been spared to see his native country once again; his prayer was granted; but the smile of recognition and the farewell-look were one; he had opened his eyes on his own loved land, then closed them again for ever.

Osselin rushed forward, gave a piercing cry, and fell senseless into the arms of Lord Bransby, which were extended to receive him.

The consternation occasioned by this melancholy event was extremely great; Lord Bransby was deeply affected by it. The General was

his cousin, had been his companion at school, his friend at college, and had maintained a regular correspondence with him since his residence in India, by which means he was in possession of certain facts relating to the birth of Osselin Vassor, to which that gentleman was himself a stranger, never having heard more from his uncle than that he had lost both parents in his infancy, since which time, he had remained under his protection.

More than this, Osselin had never known, except that his father had served under General Cameron, whose sister he married; and although the young man had often wondered why he should have been left thus utterly destitute, and entirely dependent on the benevolence of his affectionate uncle; all the information he could obtain, in answer to his frequent enquiries on this subject was, that his parents had both been imprudent, and it was seldom that young officers were rich.

Amply had the General fulfilled the duties of a father and guardian, and his death was the first misfortune his nephew had ever known, therefore it is not to be wondered at, that he felt it more severely than those to whom grief is familiar.

The feelings of age are not so violent, nor so easily excited as those of youth, but the impression made on them is much more lasting, and it was long before Lord Bransby recovered from the effects of the dreadful shock he had sustained; nevertheless he endeavoured to command himself as much as possible in order to console his young friend, whose heart, warm as the Indian sun that shone upon his birth, felt with equal intensity the emotions of joy or sorrow.

Frequently he threw himself, sobbing aloud, on the neck of the benevolent old lord, who tried to soothe him into composure by repeated promises of supplying, to his utmost, the place of that inestimable protector he had lost.

Kindness on the sensitive mind of Osselin, soon acquired an influence tending greatly to restore tranquillity to his breast. He saw that, although he had lost his dearest benefactor, and was in the land of the stranger, he was not an alien from his kind; but that other, and apparently generous hearts, felt an interest in his happiness, and were open to his love; and the anguish of the first moment of bereavement, gradually subsided into a more composed, though not less sincere sorrow.

Captain Arlington, with the two lieutenants, Talbot and Sellwood, had left Falmouth on the preceding evening, consequently the news of the general's death soon arrived in town, and all the necessary preparations were made in Grosvenor-square, for the reception of the body, which Lord Bransby had arranged should be carried to his own house previous to its interment; anxious to shew this last testimony of respect and esteem for his departed, and much regretted friend.

On the following day, all the preliminaries completed, the mournful procession left Falmouth, and travelled night and day, till it reached the metropolis.

CHAPTER XIII.

BRANSBY house had been duly prepared to receive the remains of General Cameron. Every part of it wore an air of the most profound melancholy ; an almost total silence prevailed, and not one of its inmates but seemed deeply impressed with that inexplicable feeling of awe, death never fails to excite.

Osselin had expressed a wish not to be seen by any of the family till after the funeral, and this request was attentively observed ; no one sought to intrude on his sorrows, which is a delicacy of conduct that ought to be more generally observed ; for nothing can be less desirable than for people to insist upon forcing their consolations on those, who desire rather to be left to the quiet indulgence of their grief.

There is a luxury in the uninterrupted “ enjoyment of sorrow ;” but it is when the tear can steal along the cheek unseen, and the pride of stoicism all men possess, yields to the less manly, but more genuine, call of humanity.

Before the eye, even of compassion, we stifle nature, lest our acknowledgment of its power should be called weakness; but alone, the heart throws off the trammels of false shame; the overburdened soul relieves itself by tears; and the heart of the mighty hero proves itself, in such moments, of the same mould as that which beats in the gentle bosom of childhood.

On the arrival of the travellers, the young stranger was immediately shewn to the apartments assigned to him, and Lord Bransby, after a short interview with his sister and children, retired to his library.

It was late in the evening, and Osselin, impatient to be alone, hastily partook of some slight refreshment, and dismissed the attendants as quickly as possible; then, throwing himself on a couch, he gave way to an unrestrained burst of sorrow.

In a foreign land, and surrounded by strangers, whose manners he had yet to learn, there was a feeling of desolateness mingled with his grief, that was oppressing even to anguish.

“Oh; how gladly would I resign,” he exclaimed, “all the wealth thy bounteous hand has heaped upon me, to be pressed once again, my more than father, to thy affectionate heart!”

In such passionate exclamations he passed the greater part of the night; till at length, exhausted with mental anguish, and bodily fatigue, the compassionate Deity who passes his gentle hand over the brows of unhappy mortals, to release them for awhile from the consciousness of their sufferings, softly closed his aching eyelids, and he slept till

a late hour in the morning, when, at the request of Lord Bransby, he joined him at breakfast in the library.

Lord Bransby judged it advisable to allow the regrets of his young friend to take their own free course; therefore, instead of harassing and irritating him with lectures on the duty of supporting our misfortunes with fortitude and philosophy, he entered into his feelings, sympathized with his distress, lamented with him, their mutual loss; and, by thus sharing, insensibly soothed the sorrows of the youthful mourner, whose heart gradually warmed towards one whose feelings mingled with his own.

Osselin passed the whole of his time in the library, and, in a few days, was so far composed as to be able to converse, if not with cheerfulness, at least with a degree of tranquillity that was very gratifying to his benevolent and excellent guardian, for so was Lord Bransby nominated by the will of the late General, and most readily did he undertake the charge.

It was a hard task for Osselin to follow his beloved relative to the grave, but this painful duty over, his thoughts and feelings began again to flow in their accustomed channel, although it was several days before he could summon resolution to mix with the family circle.

It was on the fourth evening after the funeral that Lionel persuaded him to enter the drawing-room, and it was with much reluctance he consented; but, his scruples once overcome, and the ceremony of introduction over, he felt himself so

much more at ease than he had expected, that he retired to rest in better spirits and with brighter anticipations than had enlivened him for some time past.

He was naturally pleased with the evident solicitude of this amiable family to banish from his mind the impression that he was a stranger: he was charmed, too, with the gaiety and frankness of Louise, who had exerted herself to entertain him. He was fond of music; she had played and sung several airs that were particularly adapted to soothe and cheer his mind, which was composed by their subduing influence; and her lively conversation charmed away, for the moment, the keen remembrance of his loss.

“ Well, Emily,” said Louise, when they retired for the night, “ what think you of our stranger guest.”

“ It is rather too early to have formed an opinion,” replied Emily; “ besides, in the present depressed state of his spirits, our judgment might probably be a wrong one.”

“ You are always so provokingly reasonable! Now I can tell, at first sight, whether I shall like a person or not.”

“ And have you never found yourself mistaken?”

“ Oh! very possibly; nevertheless I cannot imagine how you can pass an entire evening with any man, without knowing what you think of him.”

“ I do know what I think of him.”

“ Then pray make your opinion known to all present.”

“ I think he is a very pleasing young man.”

“ Good heavens ! Emily ; you are the coldest, most insensible girl I ever listened to ! A very pleasing young man!—I’ve really no patience with you — it must be affectation. Now hear my description of him. His form is symmetry itself ; his countenance expressive of all that is noble ; his voice is melody ; his movements, all elegance and grace ; the pensive air that overshadows his beautiful features renders them delightfully interesting ; and when he recovers his spirits and animation, he will be the most brilliant orb that has ever risen in our hemisphere.”

“ Sir Charles Freemantle left his card this morning,” said Emily ; “ but I suppose such dull planets as these are all on the point of being eclipsed by the rising sun.”

“ Oh ! not at all—I mean to introduce a new system of astronomy ; we will all shine out together ; sun, moon, and stars : and, now and then, perhaps a comet may appear amongst us.”

Sir Charles Freemantle and Major Dufforth had, in fact, left their cards that morning, being the first visit the former had paid since his return to town.

But among the numerous callers at Bransby House, upon the occasion of the recent melancholy event, was one that excited some surprise ; this was no other than Mr. de Tracey, whose complimentary visit on such an occasion was as unlooked-for, as, from others, it was a matter of course.

The handsome and wealthy Indian was soon the topic of conversation in every family, where there were single ladies under the age of forty. All the circumstances attending his arrival in this country were related in a thousand different ways ; there

was but one fact in which all agreed, and that was the most important one, viz. that he was sole heir to the immense possessions of the General ; and this point clearly ascertained, many were desirous of being received as visitors by the quiet inhabitants of Bransby House, who had previously spoken with great contempt of that family.

“ We must call on the Bransbys as soon as it is proper,” said Miss Arlington to her mamma. “ I never heard such a fuss about the death of anybody in my life, as they have made about that old man ; I don’t believe they can feel half that they wish people to suppose they do.”

“ There must be a certain degree of decorum kept up in these things,” replied Lady Arlington ; it is quite proper to grieve for the death of a near relation ; the General was, I think, first cousin to Lord Bransby.”

“ So I have heard ; but it is not at all natural to imagine, that, after having been absent twenty years, his lordship could care much about him ; for my part, I always suspect a vast deal of hypocrisy under all this wonderful display of feeling ; besides, it was to be expected, in the common course of things, that a man at his time of life, who had been living such a length of time in a tropical climate, would be likely to die under the fatigue of a long voyage ; I wonder he lived to reach England at all.”

“ If you are talking of old General Cameron, and his eastern heir,” said Captain Arlington, who came into the room at that instant ; “ it won’t do, Marian ; the birds of the East are not so easily caught I can assure you.”

“ You are perfectly ridiculous ! Robert ; ” said the young lady, indignantly. “ Do you suppose I should give myself the trouble to bestow a moment’s consideration on an illiterate Indian boy ? ”

“ I beg your pardon, my sweet sister ; I really forgot that he is not one of the literati — but I am afraid the world is so degenerate, that this crime will not stand greatly in the way of his preferment ; the merits of the learned are, I fear, very often overlooked.”

This was uttered in so sarcastic a tone, that Miss Marian could not misunderstand the pointed allusion to herself, contained in the latter part of his speech ; and colouring with resentment, she replied, “ that they who were ignorant themselves, were unable to appreciate the value of erudition in others.”

“ Poor Vassor ! I begin to tremble for him ; he certainly will not make a very capital figure here ; and I shall give him a hint that the best thing he can do, is to ship himself off again as quickly as possible, or there will be a most distressing exposé of ignorance and barbarism, when our wild man of the woods happens to come in contact with the *erudite* of this literary corner of the globe.”

“ Indeed,” retorted Marian, spitefully, “ I think that not only the natives, but all those who visit the country, become perfect savages.”

“ *Cela va sans dire,* ” said the captain, laughing. “ It is a point of good breeding to adapt our manners to our company — and do at Rome as Rome does : but seriously speaking, Marian, would it not be a task worthy of your exalted talents, to polish the mind of this rude barbarian ? ”

“ Cultivation does not always lessen rudeness, it appears,” replied the lady, contemptuously.

“ Now don’t be personal — what can you expect of one whom you have just declared a savage by naturalization, although in the guise of an English officer ?”

“ The binding of some books constitutes all their value,” answered Marian, with a scornful glance at the captain’s uniform.

“ Very true, Miss Arlington, and it is fortunate our family library does not consist entirely of such useless works. I am the volume for shew — your attractive qualities certainly do not appear on the surface — modest worth ever seeks concealment, and yours takes such especial care to hide itself, that I question whether it would not be a hard matter to find it.”

“ Oh ! sir, your wit is equal to your understanding — neither of them, I am sorry to say, being of the very first order.”

“ One first-rate genius is enough in a family,” observed Arlington ; and, walking towards a window, he began humming a tune, unmindful of the bitter retort that followed this remark. At length, to her brother’s infinite relief, the young lady, ‘ exceeding wrath,’ quitted the room, closing the door with a want of gentleness that sufficiently betrayed the ruffled state of her temper.

Another reason, too, had operated to drive Marian from the apartment, where she would perhaps have carried on the war a little longer, had she not heard Lavinia’s bounding footstep upon the stairs ; and she could not bear to be a witness of the ten-

derness Captain Arlington lavished on his younger sister, of whom he was particularly fond, and who repaid his affection with a love that was little short of adoration. Wholly unaccustomed to kindness and attention, she regarded him as her guardian angel, and gaining a degree of confidence by the protection his presence afforded her, lost a part of that embarrassment and excessive timidity which had prevented any of her brilliant qualifications from displaying themselves; and thus encouraged, appeared to much greater advantage than she had ever done before.

CHAPTER XIV.

LIONEL BRANSBY had lately been absent from town for several days together; and his silence with regard to the motive of his journeys, the frequent recurrence of them, and, above all, the evasive answers he gave to any questions, concerning the road he travelled, excited much curiosity in many, and was a source of continual uneasiness to his father; who, being no stranger to the sentiments of his son on the subject of his approaching marriage, was apprehensive of some unfortunate consequence arising from his apparently increasing disinclination to it. Fearful, therefore, of precipitating any unpleasant event, he forebore to urge a disclosure of the nature of that engagement which drew him so much from home, consequently, it remained a mystery; and Lady Caroline Gresham, who had the most indisputable right to demand an explanation was so perfectly indifferent to his absence and the cause of it, that she seldom made an observation on the subject; and in reality, felt rather relieved than distressed by it.

His manner when at home, too, was greatly

changed ; he seldom spoke, and frequently displayed an impatience, and irritability of temper hitherto entirely foreign to his nature and disposition.

This alteration was too evident not to excite general observation, but the slightest allusion to it, was so displeasing to him, that no one ventured to enter deeply upon the subject.

The Count de Léal who had formerly been his chosen associate, soon perceived that his society was not so acceptable and coveted as it had been ; and, in fact, all company and conversation had become irksome to his late constant companion.

The count had contracted a close intimacy with Osselin Vassor, whose pursuits and inclinations were so much in unison with his own, that they were soon inseparable, which friendship was highly pleasing to their mutual guardian.

One morning the two friends were taking a stroll in Hyde Park, when suddenly the count began to walk at a most furious pace.

“ What the deuce is the matter with you ? ” said Osselin, “ why are you going at the rate of a steam carriage, sixty miles an hour, at least.”

“ I must see her — by heavens ! I will speak to her ! ”

“ Speak to whom ? ”

“ To Lavinia Arlington,—see—that’s her in the blue shawl, walking with that tall officer ; her brother, I suppose.”

Osselin looked in the direction pointed out, and immediately recognized the companion of his voyage, and, in a few moments they all were mutually introduced, and pursued their walk together.

In the highest good humour with each other, the

whole party entered Kensington gardens, as Captain Arlington had ordered his servant to wait with his cabriolet at the gate in Kensington, that he might drive his sister home.

To Lavinia the moments passed as in a fairy dream; and although her light heart beat quicker as her young lover, in walking by her side, directed to her all his conversation, all his looks, and all his thoughts, she felt perfectly at her ease, and gave way to the natural gaiety of her temper; and if the count was before enamoured of her beauty and simplicity, the charm was doubly riveted, now that he found, to these were added intelligence and wit.

On reaching the gate where the cabriolet had been ordered, it was no where to be seen; and although this circumstance did not give the slightest uneasiness to Lavinia, it had a very different effect upon her brother, who, not having the same reasons for thinking lightly of the fatigue of walking back again, began to exclaim, at the very top of his voice, against the negligence of his servant. Lavinia suggested that he might possibly have mistaken the place appointed, and be in attendance at the other entrance.

“Wait here then, while I see,” said the captain, and he was out of sight in an instant, leaving his sister with the two friends.

It only required a look from the count, to convey to the quick comprehension of Osselin that his absence, at that moment, would be preferable to his company.

“I have lost my watch seal!” said the *un de trop*, pretending to look for it on the ground, just

around the spot where he was standing ; and under the same pretext, he walked towards the end of the path they had just quitted, leaving Lavinia and the count to follow at their leisure. There was no time for reflection ; this was an opportunity that might never again occur, and it required but an effort to profit by it.

As soon as they were alone, he took her hand, which trembled violently, as in anticipation of what he was about to say, while he was himself scarcely less agitated. Knowing that the duration of these precious moments must necessarily be very short, he had courage to say, in that brief space, what costs many men whole years of reflection, and is said with great difficulty, and in a very awkward manner at last. Now the count had no time to be awkward, nor the lady to evade and hesitate.

And if all lovers were to take an opportunity of popping the question suddenly, without giving the fair one time to get ready a thousand objections, — letting her see, by half an hour's stammering preparation, that it is coming at last, they would arrive at a knowledge of the real state of her heart much sooner than is generally the case. She has no time to consider how she shall give him the most trouble to discover whether her deliberations are likely to terminate in a “yes,” or a “no.” The truth comes at once, and all she can do afterwards is to wonder how she could possibly be so silly.

The count and Lavinia, at the end of five minutes, had arrived at the happy conclusion that they were all the world to each other ; and this avowal, vo-

luntarily made on the part of the gentleman, had been extorted in a hurried manner, amid downcast eyes, blushes, and tremblings from the agitated girl, whose confusion betrayed to Osselin, when he rejoined the lovers, what had been passing during his absence.

In a few moments afterwards, Captain Arlington returned with intelligence that the cab had been waiting above an hour at the wrong entrance, and had now driven round to the Kensington gate, and the party separated.

In walking slowly back through the gardens, the Count de Léal made Osselin the confidant of his love, who readily tendered his services to assist him in the prosecution of it, which must necessarily be attended with the utmost secrecy, as the slightest suspicion, on the part of mother or sister, would be sufficient to induce them to convey poor Lavinia to a remote part of Scotland, where they were blessed with a moderate quantity of aunts and cousins, who would willingly undertake the benevolent and pleasing task of reforming a refractory young lady.

The count was not wealthy, and Lady Arlington depended upon improving her own slender finances, by securing a splendid alliance for her youngest daughter, which she had for some time had in view, with the hopeful heir of a Scottish nobleman of considerable possessions ; and she built her expectations upon the beauty and accomplishments of Lavinia, which she hoped would counterbalance her want of fortune.

A union with the Count de Léal, therefore, although superior in point of rank, would by no

means suit her views with regard to more substantial considerations ; and of this Lavinia was fully aware ; which conviction made her anxious to conceal the circumstance, even from her brother ; not that she feared any opposition from him, who she knew was of too careless a disposition to be actuated by any prudential motives whatever ; but she feared his thoughtlessness might lead to a discovery, the blessed effect of which would inevitably be a long residence among her Scottish relations, a prospect which did not offer any thing particularly inviting.

Such were the considerations that determined Lavinia to maintain a guarded silence ; and such will ever be the effect of undue restraint and severity exercised upon the young, who have hearts to feel, and imaginations to supply remedies.

A young and romantic girl, excluded entirely from the world, is naturally pleased with the first homage paid to her attractions, particularly if the admirer, also, be young and handsome ; one error leads to another. In dread of further harshness she conceals this first, and, most probably, imprudent attachment ; the necessity for concealment increases the passion, and, in the sequel, she flies from a home that is hateful to her, to seek for happiness in visions of bliss, the unsolidity of which she has yet to learn ; and for all these natural consequences she is perhaps spurned by parents, who will not reflect that their own conduct has been the primary cause.

Had the offender been allowed to mix in society, she would at least have had the opportunity of

forming her own estimate of character, and of making her selection by comparison. And in making that selection, of what inestimable value is the advice of an affectionate parent to guide the erring judgment, and give a proper direction to the first impulses of an inexperienced heart.

CHAPTER XV.

STILL conversing on the same subject, the two young men returned to Grosvenor Square, where they found no one in the drawing room but Lady Hamilton, Louise, and the Duke of Belltown ; the last two of whom were playing chess : but the soft sounds of the harp in an adjoining room, intimated that Emily was exercising her skill on that delightful instrument.

“Move your knight to check him,” said the count, looking over the game.

“Oh ! fie, monsieur le Comte ; is it not enough to check him myself, without moving my knight to such ungentle acts ? *que tu es barbare !*”

“Your knight is a dangerous foe,” continued the count, “and, *with the assistance of a Bishop*, will, some time or other, give him check mate, and come off conqueror at last.”

“He may not find that quite so easy as you imagine,” said the duke sulkily, and, making at the same instant a bad move, he lost all chance of the game.

Just then the attention of Osselin was drawn towards the music-room by a voice which was not that

of Emily, singing 'Ombra Adorata' in a tone of the sweetest melody. He walked softly towards the door of the apartment; Lady Caroline Gresham was seated in a careless attitude at the harp. Her beautiful light brown curls hung carelessly yet gracefully over her neck, giving an interesting and rather romantic appearance to her whole figure, which was slight and delicate; while the shade of melancholy observable on her countenance, threw a softer charm over her lovely and expressive features, that struck Osselin with admiration. It was the first time he had seen her, and he stood gazing for a moment, almost unconsciously; and, so riveted was his attention, that he did not perceive for some instants that he was, himself, the object of earnest observation to one of his own sex, till the voice of Lady Hamilton restored his self-possession.

"I had forgotten, Mr. Vassor, that you are a stranger to Lady Caroline; allow me to introduce you—Lady Caroline Gresham, Mr. Vassor—Mr. de Tracey."

De Tracey was leaning over the back of Lady Caroline's chair, when Osselin first entered the room; but he now stood in pensive silence, with his arms folded, and his eyes still fixed on the young Indian, with an expression of the deepest interest.

Osselin felt rather uneasy at finding himself the object of these scrutinizing glances, and something like resentment flushed his cheek, and made his lip quiver; but this momentary disquietude soon gave place to a softer feeling, as he begged Lady Caroline to continue the strain that had so enchanted him.

“ What shall I sing ? ” she asked, raising her mild blue eyes to De Tracey’s face, with so sweet a smile, that Osselin felt an encreasing antipathy to him. How slight a circumstance will render still more disagreeable to us, any individual we are not inclined to be pleased with !

“ Sing what you please,” said De Tracey, “ and it cannot but give me pleasure.”

She sang ; and Osselin, enraptured, thought no angel was ever half so beautiful, as he listened to her silvery voice. *

LADY CAROLINE’S SONG.

Gliding slowly — gliding slowly,
 Onward, onward, steers the bark :
 Speed it, for its freight is holy,
 Speed it o’er the waters dark.
 Guard it, heaven ! for it is laden
 With an off’ring for above ;
 Sinless heart of spotless maiden —
 Victim of deluded love.

Vows unheeded — fealty broken,
 Briefly tell the tragic tale
 Which, in days past, traced its token
 On a cheek as fair as pale.
 Yet when fainting — fading — lying
 Hopeless, lorn, abandon’d, there ;
 Struggling o’er the pangs of dying,
 This the spirit’s parting prayer.

“ When the toils of life are over,
 When the eye is cold and dim —
 Bear my faithless, yet dear lover,
 The heart which, living, beat for him.”
 Gliding slowly — gliding slowly —
 Onward, onward, steers the bark :
 Speed it — for its freight is holy,
 Speed it o’er the waters dark.

“ Oh ! pray Caroline, leave off those melancholy airs, and play something a little more animating ;” said Louise, “ for I have been most shamefully defeated, and want a merry strain to revive my drooping spirits.”

Lady Caroline played several lively airs, and then began a favorite waltz.

“ Charming ! delightful !” exclaimed the duke, who had obtained some celebrity for waltzing gracefully — “ Do me the honour, Mademoiselle Louise ; un petit tour de valtz ?” and Louise, with her usual giddiness began to dance, in spite of the disapproving looks of Emily, who, knowing perfectly well her sentiments with regard to the Duke of Belltown, thought she gave him far too much reason to suppose she intended to encourage his hopes.

At this unfortunate moment, the door opened, and Sir Charles Freemantle was announced. Louise ceased waltzing, but the mischief was done, and she felt, for an instant, the folly of flattering the vanity of a man she never intended to marry, merely for the sake of temporary amusement, without bestowing the slightest reflection on the probable consequences of such inconsiderate conduct.

The baronet still wore his arm in a sling, and looked rather pale from his long indisposition.

He paid his compliments to Lady Hamilton with infinite grace, and expressed his warm acknowledgements for the attention shown him during his illness, and grateful sense of the anxiety that had been manifested for his recovery. Having received the several congratulations on his convalescence, he was introduced to Osselin Vassor,

with whose name he was not entirely unacquainted, as his friend Lieutenant Talbot had passed several days with him before he went into Derbyshire, where his mother resided ; consequently all the principal events of the voyage had been related ; particularly those that had marked their landing, and excited such general interest.

De Tracey had disappeared at the commencement of the waltzing, and Osselin, who felt an unaccountable restraint in his presence, was quite relieved on perceiving that he was no longer in the apartment.

“ You are fond of music—do you play, Mr. Vassor ?” said Lady Caroline.

“ I do not—but, though I know nothing of music as a science, my taste is sufficiently refined to listen with delight to you.”—She blushed, and he continued ; “ I fear I shall appear very uncultivated in this land of refinement, where so many accomplishments are requisite to gain favour in a lady’s eyes ; I shall not dare to enter the lists with the polished Europeans.”

“ There is a merit in singularity,” she replied, smiling.

“ Not in being singularly stupid :” said Osselin, laughing, and touching with one hand two or three strings of the harp.

“ Strange !” said Lady Caroline, “ that you should have touched the first notes of — ”

“ Of what ?”

“ Of some air—I forget—I don’t know — ”

“ Oh ! I remember the name of the air,” said the Duke of Belltown in a careless tone, as he turned over some drawings—“ it was the begin-

ning of ‘First love.’”—and he began humming the tune.

Osselin darted a quick glance towards Lady Caroline, whose face was crimsoned over in an instant; she arose, and joined Louise, who was conversing with Sir Charles Freemantle.

“Who is that beautiful creature?” whispered Osselin to the count.

“She is the bride elect of Lionel Bransby; so take care of yourself.”

At this unexpected information, the countenance of Osselin underwent a sudden change, and he was dull and thoughtful for the rest of the day.

When the ladies retired to dress for dinner, Lady Hamilton took occasion to reprove Louise for, what she termed, the levity of her conduct.

“My dear child,” said the good lady, “we must not, in this world, do always that which affords us a momentary gratification, and feel satisfied, because there is, in reality, no harm in it; but we must have some regard to the opinions of others, and to the results that are likely to accrue from want of prudence, or even the appearance of it; for it is not sufficient to be conscious yourself of acting with propriety, if you let it seem to the world that you do otherwise. I find it necessary therefore, to make some observations on your conduct, with regard to the Duke of Belltown, which is decidedly wrong, unless you intend to encourage his addresses. All the world believes you are engaged to the duke, and it has a right to believe so: you are seen every where with him, and are upon much more familiar terms than you ought to be with a man whom it is your determination to reject.

He is, himself, perfectly justified in supposing that he will be accepted ; therefore no man will, after such unpardonable deception, feel any confidence in you : by this regular system of flirtation, you trifle away the respect of those whose esteem it is of importance to preserve—and for what ? to gain a few idle, useless, compliments, from those who would be the first to speak lightly of you. Besides, while you are thus reported to be on the point of marriage with the duke, you cannot, of course, expect proposals from any one else ; and whenever this silly correspondence is broken off, however harmless you may consider it, your pride and delicacy are likely to be severely wounded ; for a vain man like this will employ every means to prevent a supposition that he has been rejected ; and, as you have allowed all the world to witness your open encouragement of his attentions, it will readily be believed that the disappointment was not on his side."

"Say no more, my dear aunt," said Louise, on whom this last observation had more effect than all the rest of this long harangue, and she could not help shedding tears at the mere thought of such a humiliation ;—"say no more—I see how wrong I have acted in this instance, but it shall not occur again—I will dismiss him to-morrow."

"Do nothing hastily, my love ; be careful of going from one extreme to the other. I do not wish to hurt your feelings unnecessarily ; but I wish you to avoid doing any thing likely to draw upon yourself the general observation ; it was wrong of you to waltz with him this morning, unless others had been joining in the same amusement ;

where there are many doing the same thing, the attention is not drawn to any particular individual ; but, this morning, no one could avoid seeing the familiarity with which you treat his grace, and would naturally infer from thence, that you consider him in the light of your future husband : and even if this were really the case, it would be much better and safer, that it were not quite so evident ; to keep the world in ignorance on this point spares a great deal of mortification, if any unforeseen event occurs to prevent such an engagement from taking place."

Louise renewed her promises of being more circumspect in future, and perhaps the vexation she felt at the *& contre temps* entrance of Sir Charles Freemantle, had as much effect in influencing her resolves, as the lecture she had just received from Lady Hamilton.

In this fit of repentance, she had recourse to the gentle consolations of her cousin Emily.

" Oh ! Emily,—what will he think of me?—how cold and distant he was : and my own thoughtless folly will be the means of exciting the contempt of the only man whose approbation I desire.—What can I do to get rid of that odious duke ?"

" I really know not how to advise you : it would have been much easier three months ago, than it is now."

" For heaven's sake ! what is the use of torturing me by saying what ought to have been done three months ago ? I know all that myself : the question is, what is best to be done now ?"

" Dismiss him at once."

" How can I do so, when he has never openly declared himself ?"

“ My dear Louise, I cannot help thinking it an unfeeling kind of vanity that would wish to expose any man to the mortification of a refusal, when it might be avoided, by giving him to understand that his proposals would not be accepted.”

“ It is all very fine talking, Emily, and sounds extremely well; but the real fact is, men are, in general, such insufferable coxcombs, that if one endeavoured to spare their feelings in this particular, they would very probably say, ‘ Don’t alarm yourself madam — I had no intention of asking you.’ ”

“ And have they not an equally just ground of complaint against girls who encourage their addresses, merely to make fools of them ? ”

“ Perhaps it may be so — but since I have so publicly admitted the attentions of this man, I must, for my own credit, suffer him to make a formal proposal; I could not bear people to say I had made an unsuccessful attempt to become a duchess.”

“ I see you are determined not to take advice, although you ask for it,” said Emily, laughing; “ but I think you need not fear falling under such an imputation, when you consider that people have also witnessed his devoted attention to you. But, whatever may be your opinion on the subject, mine is, that you ought to terminate this affair as speedily as possible.”

Louise acquiesced in the propriety of this line of conduct, and anxiously awaited an opportunity of putting it in practice; but it was some time ere she met with one, for the gentleman in question went to Oxford on the morning subsequent to this debate, from whence he did not return for several days.

CHAPTER XVI.

LIONEL BRANSBY had been absent longer than usual on one of his secret expeditions, during which time Mr. de Tracey was a constant visiter at Bransby House ; and whether it was from the favour with which he was regarded by Lady Caroline Gresham, or from any other feeling which it was difficult to analyse, Osselin had conceived so great a dislike to him, that it was impossible, even for an indifferent person, to avoid remarking the air of disdain which, in spite of all his efforts to the contrary, diffused itself over his whole demeanour, whenever forced into conversation with one who was, with so little apparent reason, an object repugnant equally to his eye and ear. Indeed, he seldom spoke to, and only looked at him, to remark, with jealous watchfulness, his assiduous attention to her on whom he himself looked with more admiration than was strictly warrantable, when we consider that she was the betrothed of another.

Osselin had now begun to appear in public ; and the Bransbys, who, from their retired manner of living, had been thrown into some degree of ob-

security, were now inundated with visits and cards of invitation : not a ball, not a rout, but they were invited ; and Osselin, naturally gay, soon found great pleasure, by mixing in society, where he was ever received with the most flattering attention.

Vanity is inherent in us all, from the cradle to the tomb ; it is, in a larger or lesser degree the universal idol of the human heart ; and our hero was not so much of a philosopher as to despise the world's adulation, or to consider too deeply the source from whence that adulation sprang.

He could not resist the blush of beauty, which was the instantaneous effect of his appearance in the ball-room ; or mark with indifference the sparkling eye with which the offer of his hand was ever received. He danced with much elegance ; not with half-closed eyes, and that indolent step which leaves you half in doubt, whether the dancer have put himself in motion, or not ; nor did a too great degree of animation lessen the grace of his movements ; many a young heart beat quicker at his approach ; and many a maternal eye watched him with expectant eagerness.

In all parties Osselin Vassor, and the Count de Léal were the most distinguished among the crowd ; but, although he met with, and admired many beauties, Osselin thought he never saw a face so lovely, nor a form so sylph-like, as that which had enchanted his imagination, and made the first impression on his heart ; not that he suspected himself of being in love ; but De Tracey, who narrowly watched every word and look that escaped him, was much more enlightened on the subject ; so true it

is that a by-stander sees more of the game than the players themselves.

Osselin was, on his part, equally observant of De Tracey, who, he firmly believed, was endeavouring, by every art in his power, to supplant Lionel in the affections of his affianced bride; and being unwilling to attribute his own uneasiness, on that account, to jealousy, he satisfied his conscience, by assigning it to a more magnanimous cause, and succeeded in persuading himself that it arose from a just resentment for the wrongs of the absent lover; while the increasing coldness of that lover afforded him a degree of satisfaction not quite so easily accounted for; therefore he did not embarrass himself, by considering what might be the probable cause of it.

In most distinguished parties Osselin frequently met all the Arlingtons, with the exception of Lavinia; who, notwithstanding her brother's utmost endeavours to the contrary, was still excluded from those circles where she would so totally have eclipsed her unattractive sister.

The captain was highly incensed at seeing his favourite, thus sacrificed to so hopeless a speculation as the settlement of Marian, who, he predicted, would always maintain a character for *singularity*.

Miss Arlington had, at first, condescended to notice "the star of the east," as Osselin was frequently styled; but, on finding that she failed to raise either his wonder or admiration by the learned discourses with which she favoured him — that, in fact, he considered them a most intolerable bore; she ceased to patronize, and affected to treat him

with disdain, saying, “ that the only attraction Mr. Vassor possessed was his wealth ; for he had not a single rational idea, and, in point of intellect, was as deficient as an ouran outang.

“ Hah ! Sellwood, what good or evil genius has sent you here ? ” said Captain Arlington to the lieutenant, who was standing in the midst of a group of young men, at Lady Danvers’s rout. Osselin Vassor heard the name, and recognised, with pleasure, the companion of his voyage from India.

“ It must be an evil genius, I suppose,” said Sellwood, in reply to the captain ; “ no good one would venture to lead a man into such temptation ; beauty is rather more plentiful here than it was in our settlement, hey, Vassor ? ”

“ Captain Arlington would be inclined to dispute that point with you,” replied Osselin, alluding to a little affair of the heart, that the gallant captain had been suspected of at Madras ; and the heroine of which was the Governor’s daughter.

“ Oh ! he’s not an impartial judge,” replied Sellwood ; “ Talbot was the best fellow to support my opinion ; I have not heard him call a woman handsome these last three years.”

“ Ah ! that’s well thought of — what have you done with the poor poet ? is he still in town ? ”

“ No — he staid but a few days, then took his flight, poor fellow ! on Cupid’s wings, to Derbyshire, where I suspect he is pining away most sentimentally ; for I have heard a rumour that his love has played him false — *Mon dieu !* who is that little vinegar cruet just squeezing in ? I feel an excruciating pain at her very aspect. — What a

specimen of feminine graces and soft attractions!"

Arlington turned round, and coloured highly, on perceiving his own interesting sister, Marian, looking more sour and ill-tempered than usual. Without making any reply, he walked up to her, and Osselin explained to the disconcerted Sellwood the mistake he had made.

"Who in the name of all that is forbidding was to guess it was his sister!" he exclaimed; and it is hardly likely that a man, before he makes an observation on any woman he sees, will think of enquiring who are her brothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, &c. : besides, I thought Arlington had more taste than to have such a sublime article of a sister as that: however, I will do the best I can to soften the matter:—" and he went to seek the captain, who received his apology with great good humour; himself entertaining much the same opinion as that which his friend had so incautiously expressed.

Osselin had selected a very beautiful girl for his partner, and had paid her a great deal of attention during the whole evening; while she, conscious of her own charms, and fully aware that she was the envy of half the female part of the room, was flirting with a gay, and rather confident air, which encouraged him to carry his compliments to rather an extravagant length.

"Now I insist upon your owning," said the young lady, "that the Indian beauties have much finer eyes than the English."

"How can you expect me to give such an opi-

nion, when I see to the contrary," said Osselin, looking full in her eyes as he spoke.

" Oh ! I find that flattery is an art which is understood in other parts of the world, as well as in Europe."

" It is flattery everywhere else—but, in speaking to you, it is so no longer."

" Are these your true sentiments ?" said a voice on the other side of him ; he turned his head quickly, and perceived, with astonishment and anger, that De Tracey was close to him.

" I could not be aware, sir, that my conversation was overheard," said he, in a haughty tone.

" Perhaps not," replied De Tracey, coolly ; " neither are you aware of the motives which induced me to listen to it ; nevertheless, they are such as I can justify."

" No motives can authorize any man to act unlike a gentleman ; and I desire not to be interrupted."

De Tracey smiled at his warmth, and turned away ;—but as soon as Osselin was disengaged from his fair partner, he again joined him.

" You are rather impetuous, young gentleman ; but you must learn to curb your temper, particularly when you talk to men whose age ought to command the respect, at least, of one so young as you are."

" I hope I know how to respect my superiors, sir, either in age or talent ; but I will resent an insult from whomsoever I may receive it."

" I would have you do so ;—but let me caution you not to suffer an over-susceptibility to magnify into insults the actions that spring from a desire to

serve you, how discordant soever they may be to your feelings."

"And in what way am I to suppose that your interference with my conduct can benefit me?"

"Insomuch as I would warn you against the danger of giving up your mind to the intoxication of pleasure, which I see, with regret, you are too much inclined to do. Scenes like this are yet new to you; and as such, possess an almost irresistible charm; but ask yourself if a life spent in a continual round of dissipation, would be pleasing to him who watched over your infant years, when all others deserted you?

"For God's sake!—Is this a time— is this a place— to awaken such thoughts as these? What do you know of my infancy, or of him you so unseasonably mention?

"But little— yet that little gives me, perhaps, some right to offer my advice."

"Then, sir, allow me to say that, unless you make me fully aware— which I doubt your ability to do—that you have any right to control my actions, I shall certainly not listen to your advice; and in return for that with which you have already favoured me, I will offer you mine not to interfere with any man; particularly where his dearest affections are concerned, and during his absence."

"Ha! is it so? And pray from what motives does Mr. Vassor give this sage counsel? Are they purely disinterested?"

"Of what do you suspect me?" said Osselin, colouring with indignation.

"Of nothing but what is perfectly natural— of loving an amiable and beautiful young woman."

“Who is engaged by the most solemn ties to another,” added Osselin.

“Those ties are not so strong but they may be broken,” said De Tracey; and mingling instantly with the crowd, he was seen no more during the evening.

Osselin Vassor returned home in a very perturbed state of mind: the last words De Tracey had uttered still rang in his ears, and he dwelt on them as a talisman that might open to him a new and blissful road to happiness; but, although the words gave promise of this delightful prospect; the speaker of them always appeared in the visionary landscape as a formidable rival, and cast a shadow over the whole scene.

Not even to the count did he reveal what had passed but confining his newly excited hopes to his own bosom, determined to observe closely the conduct both of Lionel and De Tracey, ere he gave way to the indulgence of them.

CHAPTER XVII.

DE TRACEY had made exactly the impression he desired to make upon the mind of Osselin Vassor, who, restless and meditative during the remainder of the night, repeated, again and again, the brief sentence that had fastened itself on his imagination with a powerful hold.

“The ties are not so strong but they may be broken,”—and on these words he dwelt, without considering how the prophecy was to be accomplished ; or whether he who whispered so bright a hope, was well advised of the solidity of its basis.

De Tracey was not, at present, very anxious to conciliate the friendship of Osselin ; a friendship which he knew he could, at any time command, by a single word ; but the object he had now at heart was the union of the Indian with Lady Caroline Gresham ; which object he resolved to attain, at any cost, convinced as he was that it would be for the happiness of many.

The next morning he called, as usual, in Grosvenor Square, and found Lady Caroline alone, in a profound reverie. She held out her hand to

him, and a tear trembled in her eye as she spoke—he seated himself on the sofa by her side, and asked the subject of her meditations.

“They were rather melancholy,” she replied,—“indeed, so sad, that I ought to feel grateful to you for having interrupted them.”

“I should have but little claim to your gratitude, unless I gave you food for more cheerful contemplations.”

“Your presence alone,” she replied, “dissipates the gloom, that, in spite of the hopes your words often usually inspire in my bosom, will still, when I am left to my own reflections, depress my spirits, and make me inexpressibly wretched.

“Will you never cease to doubt?” said De Tracey, pressing the hand he still held to his lips.

At this moment the door opened, and Lionel Bransby presented himself; but instead of betraying any signs of emotion or jealousy, he walked up to Lady Caroline, coldly enquired if she were well, then, bowing distantly to De Tracey, left the room.

This chilling indifference from one who had, at least, the reputation of being her lover, was more mortifying than the keenest reproaches, and she could not refrain from bursting into tears.

De Tracey regarded her for some time in silence; at length he said, “Good God! how strange—how inexplicable it is, that there should invariably be, in the mind of woman, a propensity to conceal her thoughts and wishes. It would be as easy to grasp a moon-beam, as to compass the real sentiments of even the most candid of the female race. Listen to me attentively, Lady Caroline Gresham: what I have done, and what I intend to

do, is with a view to break off an engagement that you have led me to imagine you wish to be released from ; my sole object is to make you happy — if I have misunderstood your feelings ; if, by my interference, I am leading you from, rather than guiding you to, the path of peace, tell me so.”

“ Oh ! no — no,” she exclaimed, sobbing, — “ you have not mistaken me ; this unhappy contract has embittered my existence for many years : but, alas ! you are not yet aware how strong are the fetters by which I am bound.”

“ I know it all. — I know what the sacrifice must be ; but if it restore your peace, the rest is scarcely worth one sigh of regret. — Think not,” he added, in a gentler tone, “ that I expect one of your age and sex to contemplate with philosophic indifference, the sudden loss of a splendid fortune. I am not so unreasonable ; but if, to gratify me, and in compliance with my ardent wishes, you do submit to this, it will be my duty, as it shall be my pleasure, to supply the loss. Look upon me as your father ; would to God I could really claim the title !”

“ Forgive me, Mr. De Tracey, if I seem ungrateful, by giving utterance to the slightest expression that might imply a mistrust I am far from feeling ; but, conscious as I am that such unbounded generosity is wholly unmerited by me, how could I reconcile it to my feelings, to throw myself on the kindness and protection of — pardon the term — a stranger, on whom I have no claim ? — Oh ! no — this must not, cannot be.”

“ Your hesitation is perfectly natural ; but your

future happiness must not be destroyed by it: I know but of one way to lessen, and, I hope, to remove your objections—it is to make you acquainted with some part of my history, which I could have wished to delay yet a little longer—Do you remember your mother?"

"But faintly: I was only five years of age when she died."

"I know it well—she was an angel—my first and only love; and my affianced bride. I cannot tell you by what atrocious scheme she was snatched from me, and given to another.—Suffice it to say that I left her with the promise on her lip, that she would be mine, and mine only; and when I next beheld her, she was a wife and a mother,—the hectic of death was on her cheek,—and the being I still adored—the light of my existence—was sinking fast into the tomb. It was thus that I saw her—faded, yet still beautiful—and at that interview, the remembrance of which is madness, I swore,—solemnly swore, to your dying parent, to watch over your maturer years; and, should the advanced age of your father leave you an orphan, under the protection of strangers, to consider myself your guardian, to watch your steps through youth, and guard you especially from her fate,—an ill-assorted marriage, which she had too much reason to fear, being well aware of the premature compact that would fetter your inclinations. I bound myself, by the most sacred oath, to fulfil this charge at any cost, even should it involve my life.—Now will you confide in me?—now will you believe?"

Lady Caroline was unable to reply—so many

different and powerful emotions agitated her frame that she was wholly incapable of articulating a single word.

“ You are surprised,” said De Tracey ; “ I will leave you to compose yourself, and be assured your destiny is in your own hands : consider well what is most likely to secure your mind’s repose, and tranquillize your heart with the consciousness that there is one on earth whose chief desire is to see you happy.”

He once more raised her hand to his lips, and withdrew, leaving her to recal her scattered senses, which had been thrown into confusion by this most unexpected and interesting elucidation of the previously inexplicable anxiety he had always professed for her happiness.

The mystery was now sufficiently explained, and she could not help rejoicing that she had, undeniably, a strong claim to his protection ; but she was well aware that her mind was, at present, in too disturbed a state to admit of considering, coolly and dispassionately how far she might, with propriety, avail herself of it.

These ideas but flashed across her brain ; for, at the same moment De Tracey quitted the room Osselin Vassor entered it. Her extreme agitation, her tears, and the deepened colour that tinged her cheeks, excited his wonder, and raised his indignation against De Tracey.

“ The villain has offended you !” he exclaimed, his lips quivering with rage, and his whole frame trembling with agitation. “ By heaven ! he shall answer for it !” and he was leaving the apartment

abruptly, when the soft voice of Lady Caroline recalled him.

“Stay, Mr. Vassor! I entreat — I command you. What can you mean? and to whom do you apply so harsh an epithet? If you suppose Mr. De Tracey has offended me, you are deceived — he is my most valued friend.”

Osselin stood before her, silent and confused: the sudden burst of passion was succeeded by the deeper and more secret pang of jealousy; and it was some moments ere he could recover himself sufficiently to apologize for his rashness.

“I entreat your pardon,” he said, with an emotion he neither could nor did attempt to disguise; “I am much too hasty; say but that you forgive me.”

“Most willingly, since the fault originated in error; if you knew more of Mr. De Tracey, you would esteem and respect him.”

“I! never!!” exclaimed Osselin, his eyes flashing fire.

Lady Caroline was surprised, and involuntarily turned on him a look that seemed to enquire his meaning.

“Oh! Lady Caroline Gresham, can you expect me to have a friendly feeling for a man, when I hear you call him your *most valued friend*? and turning away, with an air of despondency, he left the room, with the full conviction that De Tracey was the favoured lover, and that it was he who would break those ties which, he had affirmed, were not so strong but they might be dissevered.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“BLESS me!” said Lady Arlington; “cards for a quadrille party from the Bransbys; what a novelty! I suppose we must go?”

“Go, by all means,” replied Miss Marian; it will be the most amusing thing in the world; poor things! they will not know how to manage any thing of the kind. Lady Hamilton will be something like a country parson’s wife presiding at her first tea-party.”

Lady Arlington was looking over the cards—“Request the honour of Lady Arlington’s company, &c.—Miss Arlington—Captain Arlington—Miss Lavinia Arlington—”

“Lavinia!” interrupted Marian, contemptuously; “how very ridiculous! I expect, by and bye, children of ten years old will be receiving proposals of marriage. Those people would make Lavinia excessively forward, if she were suffered to be much with them.”

“What shall I do about it? Robert will certainly wish her to go; and there will be another

disturbance, as there was about Lady Danvers—I shall be heartily glad when he is gone again."

"I wish he would stay away altogether," said the gentle Marian—"but throw this card in the fire, and say nothing to either Robert or Lavinia about the matter."

Her Ladyship, who seldom maintained an opinion in opposition to that of her daughter, not from a conviction of its being erroneous, but from actual dread of the disagreeable consequences of Marian's ill-humour, acquiesced in this proposal; and the invitation to Lavinia, on whose account, principally, Louise had persuaded her papa to allow her to give this ball, was committed to the devouring element by these remorseless incendiaries.

It happened, on this very day, Lady Arlington received intelligence that two old maiden aunts from Aberdeen, whom she had long expected, had arrived in town; and taken up their abode in that part of the world, whose name is so grating to ears polite—Islington.

These ladies were too wealthy to be neglected or offended; and, as Marian observed, "it was much fitter to hide their ignorance in those unknown regions, than to sully the polite air of St. James's with their broad Scottish dialect, and vulgar propensity to stare in at shop windows, and buy bargains."

Every attention, however, was paid to the two Misses Douglass: morning visits were made to them, in which visiting Lavinia was permitted to share; the carriage was in constant requisition to fetch them to dinner, and to convey them back to Islington at nine o'clock, the hour at which the good old ladies usually regaled themselves with thick

milk and biscuits, ere they betook themselves to their nocturnal repose.

Nothing could induce the gay captain to join in what he termed “ legacy hunting ; ” and, although he was sufficiently polite when he happened to meet the “ northern antiques,” his manner was entirely free from the over assiduity that frequently marks the attentions of people to their rich relations ; and many were the taunts levelled at him by his elder sister for his careless indifference to the future advantages he might derive from a little more attention to them. To these representations he generally replied by a smile of ineffable contempt ; and once or twice he was provoked to intimate that Marian was actuated by a sympathetic feeling, engendered by the anticipation of becoming a member of the unmated sisterhood. To such hints as these she replied, with bitterness, that her prudent foresight in securing friends, was in the expectation of being reduced, by his extravagance and unprincipled conduct, to need their assistance.

But Marian, with all her sycophancy, was no great favourite with her aunts, who were shrewd enough to perceive how little sincerity existed under her forced smiles, and studied solicitude. They soon discovered that she adopted a different manner towards them from her natural one, an error into which many a fawning relative is apt to fall ; they have not tact enough to keep up the same amiable air to every body, in the presence of the rich uncle, aunt, or cousin, whose good-will they would conciliate ; but they devote their exclusive attention to the said uncle, aunt, or cousin ; while they entirely neglect, and perhaps behave with

rudeness to others, which naturally raises a suspicion in the mind of the party who is made the sole object of consideration, that the respect is paid to his estate, not himself; and the consequence is, he leaves his money to somebody else.

Lavinia, on the contrary, without an effort, or even a thought on the subject, made rapid progress in the affections of her aunts. Her unstudied gentleness, and the uniform respect with which she treated them, gained wonderfully on their hearts, which were not of the softest mould, rather an advantageous circumstance, as an impression once made was not easily effaced.

Robert Arlington was of opinion that it would be a pity not to derive some benefit from the visit of the Misses Douglass to the great capital — a step which had cost much deliberation, and was, in all probability, the most important event that had occurred to them during the long course of their lives, which had flowed on in so unruffled a stream, that no two days had differed very materially from each other; he therefore resolved to mark this memorable circumstance by “*une petite espièglerie*,” with which he intended to favour his mamma and sister.

Miss Marian Arlington had supposed that, in burning the card that invited her sister to Bransby-house, she had effectually got rid of the disagreeable fear of being compelled to enter a ball-room with the tall and graceful Lavinia by her side; but the captain had learnt, through another channel, that his pretty sister was invited, and, suspecting how the case really stood, determined to punish Marian, and take Lavinia with him.

Accordingly, on the morning of the ball he took

possession of a note written by Miss Douglas ; and imitating the hand so exactly, that it would have been almost impossible for even that lady herself to discover the deception, he manufactured a short epistle, in the true Scottish style, desiring Lady Arlington and Miss Marian to go to them without delay, as poor sister Jeannie was taken suddenly and alarmingly ill, and intended to make her will that very night.

The plot was so well contrived, that the note reached Brook-street just at the moment when Marian's head was submitted to the management of Monsieur Jasmin, a friseur of the first eminence, newly imported from the "rue St. Honoré."

With a visage that would have rendered the three furies beautiful by comparison, Marian perused the note ; disappointment and rage distorted every feature ; but the necessity of the case admitted of no alternative ; the poor friseur with a most rueful countenance, and doling out "Ah ! mon dieu ! quel dommage !" at every pin that he reluctantly displaced, pulled down the fabrick he had, in all the pride of his heart, beheld rising to an enormous height beneath his magic touch. Had Raphael been compelled to destroy, with his own hand, his *chef-d'œuvre*, at the very moment of its completion, he could not have felt more horror than did le pauvre Jasmin, at being thus obliged to decapitate his own work.

All the mortifying alterations in the costume for the evening being effected, Captain Arlington had the pleasure of seeing the two ladies depart on this unprofitable expedition.

The moment the carriage was fairly off, and the

door closed, he flew up to his sister's apartment, and found her quietly preparing to retire for the night.

"Now, Lavinia, put on your finery with all despatch, and come with me!"

"What do you mean, my dear Robert?"

The captain explained, in a few words, the arrival of the note, but not the manner in which it had been sent, which had thus altered the arrangements for the evening; and he again urged Lavinia to prepare quickly to accompany him.

"Poor aunt!" said she, "I hope she will not die."

"There is no time to think of that now,—besides, she will not die, I dare say—so, my dear little sister, dress yourself with all possible speed, and come with me to Grosvenor Square."

"But how can I go, Robert? it is impossible; I am not invited."

"But you are invited; so make yourself perfectly easy on that point: the fact is, Lavinia, Marian was afraid of being eclipsed by you, and, therefore, left you in the dark on the subject; but I have been enlightened; and moreover, have given my word to Miss Bransby that you shall be there."

"How kind of Miss Bransby—and how good of you, dear brother; but if mamma and Marian had not been sent for to Miss Douglass, should I have gone?"

"Yes—yes—I would have managed it somehow: there, make haste, that's a good girl; don't stand asking a thousand questions, and making all sorts of objections."

"If you think mamma will not be very, very

angry," said Lavinia, whose ardent desire to go, almost overcame her fear of the consequences.

" She cannot be angry, love, at your going with me ; I am your brother, and, surely have a right to take you where I please ; a far greater right than Marian has to prevent you from going. Why, what a silly girl you are ! how you tremble ! have more courage — if there is any fault, I am the guilty person ; all the blame will fall on me, not you. Besides, I have a right to your obedience, and I insist upon your going."

How easy is it to reason ourselves into a belief of what we wish, and Lavinia was, in a few moments, perfectly convinced that it was her duty to submit to the will of her elder brother ; and the new-born spirit that had animated her since she had been encouraged by his affection, inspired her with a just indignation at the meanness and duplicity of Marian, which made her less scrupulous of acting in opposition to her, while she had her brother to support her in it.

Wholly occupied with the delightful anticipation of seeing and dancing with her lover, Lavinia began to arrange her toilette, which, always simple, did not occupy much time, and the captain, who was anxious to carry off his prize before the return of the enemy, hurried her as much as possible.

In the mean time the legacy-hunters were pursuing their journey towards Islington. It was not Marian said, that she was sorry the old figure was dying, but it was so provoking to happen just on that evening, when she wanted to see how awkwardly the Bransbys would manage their *soirée*.

Indulging in all these amiable regrets, they reach-

ed the place of destination ; but, what was their astonishment at finding the two old ladies quietly seated to the peaceful enjoyment of thick milk and its accompaniments.

It was necessary to give an explanation of this late visit ; the letter was produced, and disowned by the wondering fair whose name was figuring so deceitfully at the bottom of it ; and various, and manifold were the conjectures relative to the writer and his probable motives.

One of the sapient dames was of opinion that London, being an unco' wicked place, some evil-disposed ruffian had inveigled them into making this nocturnal sally, intending to waylay and perhaps murder them on their return.

But there was one thing, which had not escaped the observation of the sisters, viz. the ill concealed chagrin of both mother and daughter, when they beheld Miss Jeanie Douglass in perfect health and spirits, instead of being on the point of quitting this world.

In vain they protested their excessive joy at the falsity of the distressing intelligence they had received ; the blank looks at the moment of making this discovery had been too visible, ever to be effaced from memories, exceedingly tenacious on such points as these ; and no subsequent qualification had sufficient power to nullify the impression.

Being aware they were trespassing on the hours generally devoted to Somnus, the mortified visitors took their leave ; and, during the ride home, discussed, at length, the extraordinary deception that had been practised upon them ; but, although they racked their brains for all the probable, and im-

probable motives that could actuate the perpetrator of it, not the most remote idea of the real truth flashed across the mind of either lady.

At length they arrived, once more, in Brook Street, and as it was not yet very late, Marian proposed that they should dress immediately, and keep their engagement.

They made no enquiries for Lavinia, not once doubting that she was peacefully slumbering upon her downy pillow ; and the servants, being well aware that she had taken flight unknown to her mamma, said nothing about it, thinking she would return as secretly as she had made her exit, and never dreaming that she was gone to the very place whither their mistress was about to follow.

Monsieur Jasmin was recalled, the ladies were soon ready, and at a quarter before eleven they were set down, after this mortifying adventure, at the door of Bransby House.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE approaching ball at Bransby House had been a general topic of conversation, as being so utterly foreign to the habits of the family ; and the uninvited, especially, had elevated their nasal organ to the highest possible degree of altitude, and wondered “ who would think of going to such a thing.”

But the respectable head of that house was too careless of the opinion of those into whose exclusive circle he had never desired to intrude, to be led, by absurd example, into a violation of those rules of common sense he had laid down as guides for his conduct on all occasions.

Hence it was that many of the guests were annoyed on their arrival, by finding that they had absolutely elbow-room ; that instead of being crushed, almost to death, they were able to walk about without the slightest inconvenience ; not a single individual was precipitated over the banisters ; and nobody returned to their carriages, fatigued and heated, after having, with difficulty, penetrated as far as the first landing. Lord Bransby had, in fact, issued cards for no greater number than his

rooms would hold ; and the usual crowding and consequent disorder, was entirely prevented by this monstrous breach of the rules of “ton.” But if, by such measures, the earl avoided Charybdis, neither did he, by going into the other extreme, run into Scylla ; and the assembly which graced Bransby House was far from realizing Miss Arlington’s ill-natured prophecies. Nothing could be more select and well conducted, yet more completely *sans pretensions*.

What a pity that comfort does not become fashionable ! Poor comfort !—she has, in spite of her merits, been forcibly expelled from the circles of the great, and compelled to revolve only among the lesser planets that compose the middling classes of society :— and who would not rather belong to the sphere that is blessed and graced by her presence, than inhabit those loftier but far less happy regions from which she is banished ?

Osselin was, as usual, an object of more than ordinary attraction to the many fair ones to whom his wealth and person had been pointed out by prudent mammas as a prize worth winning. But it was in vain the black eye shot forth its lightning, or the blue orb its sunbeam ; neither the fiery flash of the one, nor the warm and tender glance of the other, were heeded by him on whom they darted their rays.

Even the beautiful flirt, who had so successfully exercised the power of her brilliant orbs on a former occasion, tried all their fascination uselessly now. His eyes, his heart, his whole soul, were occupied with one only object—an object that was becom-

ing inexpressibly dear, by its own loveliness, and the apparent impossibility of its attainment: yet still dearer by being viewed through the mediums of hope and jealousy, two of the most powerful agents in the train of the archer-god.

The lady of his love looked more than usually lovely; her beautiful ringlets, deprived for a time of their accustomed liberty, were now fashionably arranged, and ornamented with a profusion of white plumes, that fell gracefully over her neck, and shaded, though they could not conceal, her transcendent beauty.

“ Strange!” said Osselin to himself, “ that he who might call her his own, can look upon her charms with an indifferent eye”—as he observed, with mingled wonder and satisfaction, the listlessness with which Lionel offered his hand, and placed himself by her side in a quadrille; while the few observations he addressed to her, were made with that look of abstraction which indicates that the words uttered are a mere mechanical operation of the tongue, unaccompanied by any corresponding feeling of the heart; and the faint smile and air of vacancy with which such observations were answered, gave evident token that the mind of her to whom they were addressed received them with the frozen feelings of indifference.

Yet were there but two individuals in the room by whom these visible signs of mutual coldness were observed; and those two, although from very different motives, were equally interested in marking intently the slightest actions that could evince their sentiments with regard to each other: while the rest of the group, occupied by their own manœuvres,

felt little interest in the fate of two beings, who, destined for each other, afforded no matter for speculation to the disengaged of either sex. Osselin would have been happy in the conviction that the ties were not indissoluble, by which Lionel was bound to his affianced bride; and the words, so confidently uttered by De Tracey, rang incessantly in his ear; but the hopes they inspired were as constantly chilled, by a suspicion that he, who knew her sentiments so well, must himself be a secret and favoured lover. This idea was insupportable; yet why else, in the absence of Lionel, was De Tracey constantly by her side? why, when listening to him, did her cheek glow with animation, and her eye turn to his with an expression so different from the cold look with which she endured, rather than received, the forced attentions of him to whom she was betrothed.

“ What have you done with the prince of blue devils ? ” said Sellwood to Major Dufforth.

“ Left him to sup with his subjects : ” replied the major; “ I tried to persuade him to dismiss them, and come with me to night; but he is the most determined uncomfortable fellow that ever grumbled through the seven ages.”

“ Seven ! the deuce take me, but he’ll arrive at the ‘ shrill pipe and shrunk shank,’ full two seasons before his time—who is that pretty girl just coming in with Arlington ? ”

“ His youngest sister.”

“ By heavens ! I thought he had more taste than to confine his fraternity to the little crab-apple I saw one night, whose aspect I can never think upon

without a corresponding acidity of visage : I must be introduced to that angelic creature."

Lavinia had just entered the room, leaning on her brother's arm, and as the appearance of a new beauty is certain to create a sensation, where all delights are so abundant, that every pleasure loses its attraction except that of novelty, the general gaze was, in an instant, drawn towards the timid girl, who trembled and blushed at finding herself the object of universal attention.

"Courage! ma belle ;" whispered the captain, leading her towards Lady Hamilton, by whom she was received with distinguished marks of kindness ; but, had that good lady been aware of the clandestine manner in which her introduction had been effected ; it is more than probable that her strict ideas of filial duty would have diminished, in a considerable degree, the cordiality of her reception.

With Louise it was *toute autre chose* ; nothing would have delighted her more than to have been a principal actor in the *ruse de guerre*, so successfully practised by the gallant captain.

The Count De Léal, whose anxiety until this moment had been beyond all possibility of concealment, was inexpressibly happy ; and he obtained, without much difficulty, Lavinia's promise to dance with him only ; a promise overheard by Sellwood with great discomfiture, as he pronounced her to be by far the finest girl he had seen in England.

But, alas ! happiness stands ever on a basis of sand ; a sigh is sufficient to blow it into air, and poor Lavinia was destined to prove its transient nature. In the midst of the most charming gal-

lopade that had ever given animation to her eyes, and motion to her feet, (for all preceding ones had been performed with a less interesting partner, and under the superintending eye of Monsieur D'Egville,) her cheek suddenly lost its colour, her eyes were cast down in confusion, and she began to perform such extraordinary and irregular evolutions in the figure, that several young ladies, tossing their heads, declared they were quite *dérangées*; while not one of them was so completely *derangée* as the fair '*coupable*,' who had caused all the disorder.

The voice of the "Bottle Imp" issuing from its small transparent prison, never sounded half so terrible to its unlucky possessor, as did the discordant note of Marian Arlington, jarring on the ear of her ill-fated sister, whose utter dismay occasioned all the mistakes that had occurred in the dance; while her mamma and Marian were so completely petrified at the stunning apparition, whose reality they almost doubted, that they seemed lost to all other surrounding objects.

In the countenance of Marian, ten thousand demons appeared to be uniting their forces, to crush the unfortunate offender with a single glance; and her rage being too violent for concealment, Lady Arlington, fearing an exposé, whispered to Marian to feign a sudden indisposition, which hint was immediately acted upon, and a violent hysterick fit was played off in tolerable style; and if it failed to excite uneasiness, it at least served as an excuse to quit the room; therefore Lady Arlington, making a hurried apology to the lady of the mansion, and desiring Lavinia to follow her, ordered her car-

riage. It was in vain the captain remonstrated ; in vain he offered to escort Marian home himself ; her ladyship was resolute, and the sorrowful Lavinia was compelled to obey ; while her brother, fearing to expose her, alone and unprotected, to ‘ the pelt-
ing of the pitiless storm,’ which he saw she dreaded by the imploring glance she cast towards him, jumped into the carriage after her, cursing in his heart the malicious affectation that had deprived his favorite of so much gratification.

Nothing could exceed the disappointment of the count at this abrupt and unexpected termination of the felicity he had promised himself ; and finding a melancholy satisfaction in keeping his engagement to dance only with Lavinia, he deserted the ball-room, and joined an *écarté* party : but had he been even more deeply dejected than he was, he could not have resisted an inclination to risibility, on casting his eye over the figure of Miss Moreland, who, befeathered and beflowered from the “alpha” to the “omega” of her person, and bedecked with a superabundance of jewels, seemed so perfectly satisfied with herself, and with the effect she produced, as to afford a curious contrast to those who, really possessing the power of charming, shrunk with timid bashfulness from the admiration that was “won unsought.”

In the adoption of this shining costume, Miss Moreland was, perhaps, influenced by the desire of electing a successor to Mr. Augustus Clayton, who departed, not this life — but this lady, some two months back. Oft’times, indeed, hope whispered that he might, like “Lara,” return, after a temporary self-exile, and charm her ear with tales of

other times; but as these expectations had no foundation, but in her own sanguine imagination, and as *Time*, that sole discoverer of perpetual motion, still kept on with the same rapid pace, she philosophically determined not to sacrifice the chance of a present good, to the delusive hopes that were at best "*que de batir des chateaux en Espagne*;" and had therefore, this evening, put all her charms, namely, her feathers, flowers, and jewels, in requisition.

Major Dufforth was quickly aware of this little foiblesse on the part of the lady, and not being "*distrait*" by any "*égaremens du cœur*" he considered himself at liberty to pursue what he termed fair game; and overwhelmed her with the most extravagant flattery. Anxious to exhibit her conquest, she soon left the card-table, and leaned with a languishing air, on the major's arm, flirting her fan, and looking out at all corners of her eyes, to assure herself that the devotion of this new and brilliant admirer excited its proper degree of envy.

Louise, a little chagrined at the absence of Sir Charles Freemantle, had purposely surrounded herself with a train of devotees, to avoid the assiduities of the duke, who was excessively astonished to find himself unnoticed: but the idea certainly never occurred to his grace's imperturbable brain, that her "*nonchalance*" was attributable to any deficiency of merit or attraction in his own most noble person. He offered his hand — she was engaged; his arm — it was not accepted; at length, piqued at these petty refusals, he came to the important determination of making an offer that could not be rejected; and he did so with a supercilious air of

self-satisfaction, that seemed to say — “ how happy she must be ; ” — but, what was his astonishment ! his utter incapability of believing that his auricular faculties were in right order, when the young lady most unequivocally declined the proffered honour.

“ Really, Miss Bransby,” said his grace, arranging a stray curl which, by the friendly aid of a mirror, he perceived had wandered from its proper destination, immediately over his left eyebrow ; — “ 'Pon my soul ! madam, this is most extraordinary ; I imagined, positively, that you understood long ago — in fact — I cannot believe you seriously intend to refuse my proposal.”

“ I assure your grace, I am quite serious ; ” replied Louise. “ I am sorry if my conduct has ever been such as to lead you into any error with regard to my sentiments ; but this explanation will prevent the possibility of so great a mistake again occurring.”

“ Upon my honour ! madam, I'm not very much chagrined at the result of this éclaircissement ; for egad ! I'm never sure of my own mind for long together.” So saying, with a careless bow, he left her ; and, during the remainder of the evening, bestowed his gracious smiles on the beautiful flirt, which consoled her, in some measure, for the inattention of Osselin Vassor — at the same time that it convinced Louise his grace had not sustained a very severe shock from her unexpected refusal.

CHAPTER XX.

“ Now, Emily, prepare your ears to listen to a tale of woe ! ” said Louise, a few mornings after the ball. — “ What a pity papa was not bred up to the bar, and from thence mounted on to the bench : whereas, by a most impolitic stroke of fortune, the world is only favoured with a tranquil aristocrat, instead of a most potent judge.”

“ What has happened,” said Emily, to produce this wonderful discovery ? ”

“ No less than that I can, in my own proper person, testify his lordship’s fitness for the honours of the black cap and terrifying wig — but, in order to be more comprehensible, I will give you a full, true, and particular account of all that has occurred to me within the last two hours, which, I assure you, has been a most eventful period. In the first place, I have been put upon my trial, on a charge of having, maliciously and deliberately, refused an offer of marriage from the Duke of Belltown — Lord Bransby on the bench ; Lionel sole juryman — witness, Lady Hamilton. After a most patient hear-

ing, I, the prisoner, was unanimously condemned, but recommended to mercy, and finally dismissed with a suitable admonition from all the parties in court assembled, mixed with a few observations on the folly of putting the finishing stroke to all hopes of a ducal coronet, without very good and sufficient cause ; and a little wholesome advice with regard to future conduct, as regards all dukes, lords, baronets, or gentlemen commoners in perspective. The trial occupied one hour and five minutes ; after which I received a visit from Captain Arlington, who discoursed in a style sounding very like an approaching second edition of the duke. The captain's arguments, however, would probably have met with more attention from me than they did, had not my eye accidentally met this paragraph in a newspaper which lay on the table, and which has driven even my recent ordeal very much out of my memory.

Emily took the paper from her hand, and read :

“ C. F. is on the point of leaving town ; he once more solicits a renewal of correspondence, or at least, one word to afford a hope that it is not discontinued for ever.”

“ I sincerely hope, Louise, you do not intend to comply with this request.”

“ Indubitably, my dear ; hope, they tell us, is the greatest blessing mankind can enjoy. Would you, then, have me so lost to all charitable feeling, as not to dispense so great a benefit whenever it is in my power so to do ? Oh ! Emily, I am quite shocked at the hardness of your heart ! — ‘ Nay, never shake thy *curly* locks at me — he cannot say I did it.’ ”

“ Dearest Louise, I fear you are trifling away any prospect of future happiness by this want of reflection.”

“ And, dearest Emily, what end would it answer to be perpetually buried in thought ? a living death far more horrible than a real state of oblivion. I never was made for thinking seriously, and I would not exchange my giddy brains for the wisest head in the universe — so now good bye — for I am going to write to Sir Charles Freemantle.

TO SIR CHARLES FREEMANTLE, BART.

Can Sir Charles Freemantle with truth affirm, that he has abandoned any of those unjust prejudices that he has so long and so unreasonably entertained ? Can he say that he has taken any means of ascertaining whether those prejudices are well or ill founded ? Let him ask his own conscience, and it will unhesitatingly answer — “ *No.* ” His correspondent was induced, by fancying she perceived certain estimable traits that counterbalanced his failings, to endeavour to convert him into a social being, and persuade him to abandon the preposterous character of a misanthrope, so ill suited to his age and good looks ; but having failed in the attempt, can he wonder — ought he to be surprised — that she should discontinue her unsuccessful efforts ? Besides, does Sir Charles Freemantle suppose, that by walking discontentedly round a ball-room, or looking mournfully, like the knight of the rueful countenance, at every female face in a theatre, he shall discover his errors with regard to the mental qualities of the sex ? And he must remember this was the principal point on

which she wished him to convince his own judgment that he had been mistaken. But while Sir Charles Freemantle contents himself with drawing his conclusions from the very superficial view he takes of the subject, he will never arrive at a more satisfactory result; and as long as he persists in cherishing such illiberal ideas his correspondent must remain unknown. She also is on the eve of leaving town; but if she perceives any disposition, on the part of Sir Charles Freemantle to adopt a more generous mode of thinking, her communications may probably reach even the groves of Myrtlewood; for she has little fairy messengers that are ever on the alert to convey to her his thoughts, words and actions, and by these her future conduct will be regulated.

Major Dufforth and Lieutenant Sellwood were dining with Sir Charles Freemantle at Batt's, when he received the above letter. Having hastily glanced over its contents, he put it into his pocket, while the sudden alteration of his countenance was sufficiently indicative of the agreeable nature of the communication he had received.

“Aha!” said Sellwood, “I begin to suspect that even the philosophical Sir Charles is not proof against the exhilarating effects of a few lines, exquisitely touched off, on the finest pink, perfumed, neatly folded, and sealed with two doves. The inspiration of champagne is nothing to it.”

“Give me the champagne,” said Dufforth, “and let who will take the pink paper and doves — there’s too much of the milk and water in them for me.”

“ Milk and water !” exclaimed Sellwood — “ it gives me the *blues* to think of it ; — for heaven’s sake, push the bottle this way, Sir Charles — here’s the lady of the doves. But, to change the subject; do you really and positively go to-morrow ?”

“ Decidedly,” replied the major, “ unless Freemantle has altered his mind, since the arrival of the two doves.”

“ Not I, indeed,” said the baronet, “ nothing would induce me to postpone for a single day, the pleasure of returning to Myrtlewood ; particularly now, when the presence of Talbot will renew, in memory at least, those days I shall never cease to remember with regret.”

“ It will only be in memory, I expect ;” replied Dufforth, “ for he is most confoundedly altered ; and his presence will, I’m afraid, do any thing but enliven us ; his body has arrived safe in England, but there’s not the slightest trace remaining of the soul that used to inhabit it.”

“ It must have been lost on the voyage out then,” said Sellwood, “ for he never brought one to India with him : the young subalterns at Madras, always called him ‘ the love sick poet,’ and some of the ladies distinguished him by the more refined appellation of Petrarch.”

“ Petrarch ! ha ! ha ! ha ! he always had a little touch of the bard about him ; I detected him myself once, in the very fact of a sonnet ; poor Petrarch ! and so, you sail in October ?”

“ We expect so, but I shall contrive, if possible, to get a week’s shooting with you before I go ; and,

with Sir Charles's permission, intend to make Myrtlewood my head quarters."

" You had better domesticate yourself with me, at May's Hill," said the major, " for my friend there, is a miserable shot, and he might think proper to make game of you ; his discrimination between *pheasant* and *peasant* is, I assure you, extremely vague."

" Sport of that kind he might perhaps find somewhat dangerous ;" said the baronet, laughing, " but if you are not afraid of standing fire, Lieutenant Sellwood, I hope you will find more than a week to spend in Derbyshire."

It will depend upon the vessel's sailing, which is positively announced, at present, for the beginning of October ; but if her departure should be delayed till the end of the month, I shall perhaps be able to get off for a longer time."

" Do you mean to take out a wife with you ?"

" Would you carry ice to the North Pole ? or sand to the Arabian desert ? Wives are as plentiful now, on the shores of the Bay of Bengal, as stars on a frosty night. Besides, I intend to be promoted two degrees, at least, before I entangle myself in the nets of matrimony. Apropos, major, you were offering up your adorations to — no — that expression won't suit the idol's dimensions — showering down your adoration upon one of the finest specimens of antiquity that ever came within the contemplation of man."

" A real antique," replied Dufforth, " and a unique, too ; would she not be a valuable commodity to export to the oriental regions ?"

"Oh, by heavens! no — antiques won't go down there — Swan River is her only chance ; unless you mean to do the agreeable yourself, and marry her."

"I shall see how she gets on with her dancing ; for I understand that, upon the strength of a hint I gave about a graceful form, or something of that sort, she has engaged a master of the Terpsichorean art."

"I wonder you can find amusement in drawing out such follies," said Sir Charles ; "to me there is something so unnatural in witnessing such ridiculous propensities in age, that it makes me melancholy ; for I consider it as much an infirmity as madness, and equally deserving of pity!"

"You are the cleverest fellow in the world at discovering causes for melancholy ; had you not better give the pink billet a second perusal ? for it had a most desirable effect just now : upon my soul ! I think I have hit upon the true cause of your delicate feelings touching the antique ;— you are carrying on a little amatory correspondence yourself in that quarter."

The baronet laughed heartily, — as the possibility of this being really the case occurred to his mind ; while Dufforth gravely bade him beware of the fate of Augustus Clayton.

It was late when the friends separated, and the pink billet, aided very powerfully by the champagne, soon threw around Sir Charles the magic curtain of Morpheus, whose phantasmagoria presented in a thousand shapes, his unknown correspondent at one time blooming as Hebe, and smiling sweetly upon him ; then assuming the form of poor Miss Moreland dancing around him with a pen

in one hand and pink paper in the other. What with the visions and the wine, the baronet arose in the morning, with a violent head-ache, which very much excited the sympathy of the major, probably because he, also, was suffering under a similar malady, which induced him, most kindly, to prescribe an immediate application of soda-water ; he himself, contrary to all known rules of the faculty, taking a dose of his own medicine ; after which, the two friends, with all the usual accompaniments of post-boys, servants, portmanteaus, &c., were, in a few hours, far on the road to Derbyshire.

CHAPTER XXI.

NOTHING is more easy than to magnify a trifling *contre-temps* into a serious misfortune, by suffering the mind to dwell upon, and place it in every possible point of view, each assuming a darker shade than the former. It is the common fault of a vivid imagination to exaggerate either good or evil ; and the poor Count de Léal had brooded over the *désagrémens* of the ball, until he had wound himself up into a belief that he was the most miserable of the miserable ; and after having duly persuaded himself of this most comfortable fact, and finding the further keeping of so interesting a secret the worst of agonies, he communicated the untroubled state of his feelings to Osselin Vassor, who advised him to terminate his anxiety at once by calling in Brook-street, and endeavouring to learn what evil consequences Lavinia had suffered from her self-emancipation on that unlucky evening, all the attendant circumstances of which Louise had heard from the captain and communicated to the count.

“ If you fear boldly to face the enemy,” said

Osselin, “ I will call on the captain, and take you with me : he is out of town — but we are not obliged to know that.”

“ Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise ;” and therefore, with a full determination not to be guilty of *this folly*, they walked up to Brook-street, hoping chance might for once favour them.

Within a very short distance of Lady Arlington’s residence, a travelling carriage and four, having all the appearance of being destined to perform a long journey, quickly passed the count and Osselin, who both, from the transient glimpse they obtained of its interior, were almost convinced they had beheld Lavinia herself apparently bathed in tears ; but, as the rapid motion of the vehicle rendered it impossible to be certain of her identity, and prevented them from seeing whether the females who accompanied her bore any resemblance to Lady Arlington and Marian, they hastened, on the wings of impatience, to the house, where the closed window-shutters confirmed their fears. A thundering rap at the door brought to light a little elderly woman, who, in reply to the first interrogation, said that the family were all gone out of town.

What can be more completely chilling, when one has knocked at a door in the full expectation of being, in a few moments, surrounded by familiar faces, greeted by the voices of those we love, to be stopped at the threshold by these unwelcome sounds — “ All gone out of town, sir.” How we linger upon the steps ; ask another question, as if we expected the next answer to tell a different tale ; — with what a disconcerted air we turn away, and listen to the comfortless, hope-

extinguishing sound of the closing door ; — how different are the unwilling steps, and disappointed countenance with which we retrace our way, from the brisk tread and smiling looks that were conspicuous as we tripped up to the door and gave the customary notice of approach. But on the present occasion the unfortunate lover was determined not to quit the portal of the deserted mansion without obtaining some information respecting the intended destination of his lost treasure ; but this appeared no easy task — for nothing is more unvanquishable than the obstinacy of an ignorant old woman ; and in this case it seemed to be a decided forlorn hope to gain any light upon the subject. The old dame was resolved to maintain her firmness of character, and withstood all the various tones of entreaty, command and menace, with which she was interrogated. “ They might be gone to France for any thing she knew ; — they might be away two months, or three, or longer — it was impossible to say.” That old woman had certainly never been in love.

The count was almost distracted ; he began to perceive that Lady Arlington and her eldest daughter had taken advantage of the captain’s absence to convey Lavinia to a distance ; perhaps to the dreaded old aunt’s in Scotland, whither he resolved to follow her, if he could by any means discover to what part of ‘ the land o’ cakes’ she was transported. But the difficulty was that her ladyship had relations in so many, and such distant parts of that country, that the pursuit was as hopeless as to seek a man in London, with no other clue than that his name is Smith.

At length a little golden influence, the unlimited power of which is a convincing proof that the present is 'the golden age,' prevailed on the ancient to make known that the travellers were gone direct to Edinburgh; that Lavinia had been kept in ignorance of the intended journey till within a few hours of their departure, and even then was not informed to what part of the world they purposed directing their course.

This was sufficient for the lover, whose resolution was immediately taken. But the enterprise was daring, and could scarcely be achieved alone; nor was it long ere that difficulty was removed; for Osselin, with his natural warmth and impetuosity, proffered his company and assistance, which the count accepted with transport, hoping every thing from the aid of so powerful an auxiliary.

As much depended on speed, preparation was dispensed with. A carriage and four was instantly engaged; Osselin having just thought enough to forward the following note to Bransby House, while the count was *delaying* every body concerned in getting ready for their journey, by endeavouring to hasten them.

" My Lord,

" The Count de Léal and myself are going out of town for a few days; the cause was unexpected, and shall be explained on our return. Trusting to your usual goodness to excuse this abrupt departure. I am, my lord,

" Your most obedient,

" OSSELIN VASSOR."

The same messenger had orders to desire the count's valet to pack up secretly a small portmanteau, and accompany him with all possible speed. These commissions executed, our two knight-errants were, in less than an hour, on that celebrated high-road, which has conducted some few, perhaps, to happiness — but by far the greater number to misery.

Inconsiderate of all the consequences that might attend this imprudent step, the rash adventurers thought only of recovering the prize, whose value was more than doubled, by the difficulty of regaining it. In Scotland the count knew he might be united to the object of his adoration ; and, could he once persuade her to this measure, he was content to trust to Providence for the rest. Lord Bransby was kind, and might easily effect a reconciliation with his father ; and for Lavinia, he was sure she must be happy in being released from the tyranny of her present guardians, whose anger, when she was beyond the reach of its effects, would signify but little ; and he knew Captain Arlington too well to dread anything from resentment in that quarter, as he would be much more likely to regard the whole as a capital joke, than resent it as an injury. Thus he reasoned — if that may be called reasoning which is a mere attempt to find specious causes why a thing may be right, which troublesome conscience opines is notoriously wrong.

On stopping at Barnet to change horses, the young men were more surprised than pleased, at seeing Mr. De Tracey, who had just ridden up to the door of the inn ; and their vexation at this unexpected rencontre was not lessened, when that

gentleman, alighting from his horse, approached, with an air that indicated the meeting was not entirely accidental on his part, and requested a few moments' conversation in a private apartment.

"What you have to say, may as well be communicated here, sir," said Osselin, haughtily; while the count, with an impatient look, awaited the result of this unwelcome interruption.

"To you, young gentleman," said De Tracey, addressing himself to the count, "I shall only deliver the message I am charged with from Lord Bransby, who, considering himself as standing in the place of your father, while you are under his protection, requires to know why you have left town so suddenly and mysteriously, for an indefinite time, without thinking proper to mention the cause. It should seem an affair of some moment to require such a prompt departure, that it would not admit of so short a delay as would have been sufficient to make his lordship acquainted with it. But however momentous the business may be, it ought not to have been undertaken without his approbation; and the greater its importance, the more need there was for his advice. He further adds, that, as he is responsible to the marquis, your father, for your conduct whilst under his care, he conceives he has a right to demand an explanation of so extraordinary a proceeding."

The count was in the utmost perplexity; he felt it was impossible to give up the pursuit he was engaged in; yet, to persist in it after this remonstrance, was setting at defiance the authority of his guardian. In this dilemma, after a few moments'

consideration, he replied, “ that he was well aware of the respect due to Lord Bransby, but that the motives of his present journey could only be explained to his lordship himself,—which explanation should take place in a few days.”

“ And is this the answer you return to a man to whom you owe so large a debt of gratitude and respect ?”

“ It is all I can say through the medium of a third person.”

“ Then why not return to town, and obtain his consent, ere you prosecute your journey ? He will not withhold it, if your motives are such as you need not blush to avow.”

As he said this, he looked steadily in the face of the young count, who did blush deeply, and his eye sank beneath the severe and penetrating gaze of De Tracey, as he replied, in a faltering tone, that to return to town would cause too much delay for the purpose in view.

“ Very well, sir ; I shall urge the point no further : but to you, Mr. Vassor, I have more to say ; and I must entreat a few moments’ conference with you alone.”

Osselin followed him into the house, he closed the door of the room, sat down, and motioned to Osselin to be seated also, who, however, continued standing, awaiting in silence the purport of this interview.

“ Your countenance betrays impatience, said De Tracey ; “ nevertheless, you must listen to what I am about to say.”

“ I beg, sir, you will make your communications as briefly as possible, since every moment of delay is of importance to me.”

“It is of much more importance to you to devote some of those moments to reflecting seriously on the motives of your haste. Can you with truth assert that you are engaged in an honourable and blameless pursuit?”

Had any one but De Tracey addressed this question to Osselin Vassor, his natural candour and good disposition would have prompted him to confess that the expedition was not honourable, was not blameless; but from his present interlocutor he could brook neither question nor reproof; and opposition from so hated a source, only determined him still more obstinately to prosecute the adventure. He therefore proudly asked by what right Mr. De Tracey presumed to interfere with his conduct?

“By the right given me by your excellent guardian to act in his name, and by his authority.”

“To his authority, in his own person, I will submit; and to him alone will I render an account of my actions; but I will answer the impertinent interrogatories of no man, let him be deputed by whom he may.”

“And this you call spirit,” said De Tracey; “infatuated boy! if your designs are good, why not openly avow them? if they are bad, what end do you propose to yourself by persisting in them? Is it the applause of your own conscience? is it the peace of your own heart?”

“My heart and conscience are in my own keeping; and I do not require your aid, sir, in their regulation.”

“They will, I fear, be but ill regulated, if it is thus you despise the counsel of those whose age and experience entitle them to your deference.”

“ Your observations are superfluous and troublesome, sir,” said Osselin indignantly ; “ and if you sought this interview for the express purpose of insulting me, I beg to say you have acted more like an impertinent meddler than a man and a gentleman.”

“ You forget yourself,” replied De Tracey sternly, “ and also appear to forget that I am not acting on my own account, but as the representative of Lord Bransby ; for shame ! for shame ! young man ; blush for your intemperance !”

Osselin was no longer able to control his passion : it blazed forth with unrestrained violence. “ I will not submit to this insolence,” he exclaimed, “ you shall answer for it hereafter ; and I advise you to look to your own conduct — will that bear scrutiny ? is that free from reproach ? Ask your own heart and conscience if you are not playing a hypocrite’s part, and endeavouring to injure, in the tenderest point, the man for whom you are professing so much regard ?”

“ You know not what you are saying,” said De Tracey, calmly.

“ I know well what I say,” answered Osselin, fiercely, “ and am ready to support it.”

De Tracey only smiled.

“ That will scarcely serve you, sir,” continued Osselin, still more provoked by his coolness ; “ we shall find an opportunity of settling this difference on my return ;” and without waiting for a reply, he quitted the room, rejoined the count, and they resumed their journey at a rapid pace.

To account for the appearance of De Tracey at this juncture, we must return to the hotel in Picca-

dilly, from whence the note had been despatched to Grosvenor-square, and had occasioned there no little surprise and uneasiness. De Tracey, who was at Bransby-house at the time, was strongly impressed with an idea that all was not as it should be, and anxiously requested Lord Bransby's authority to follow the young gentlemen and ascertain, if possible, the true cause of so sudden and unaccountable a flight. His lordship being himself unequal to much exertion, yet alarmed for the safety of his two wards, as well as the propriety of their conduct, eagerly embraced the friendly proposition; and De Tracey, without a moment's hesitation, mounted his horse, and traced the gallants, whom he overtook, as we have seen, just as they had completed the first stage of their journey.

CHAPTER XXII.

By enquiring at the different inns, the Count de Léal very soon discovered that the fugitives were about two hours in advance upon the road ; and this being as close an approximation as was, at present, desirable, he guardedly preserved the same respectful distance, until they arrived at that happy land, where every facility is afforded the youth of both sexes, to diminish the number of foolish persons in the world, by making two into one. As soon as they had crossed the Tweed, the count became excessively impatient to give Lavinia some intimation that a rescue was contemplated ; but Osselin strongly opposed this measure, thinking it a much better plan to take her by surprise ; as it was very likely, by giving her time to reflect, the scheme might be altogether frustrated by an untimely fit of prudence.

This opinion had its due weight, and they continued their route towards Edinburgh in anxious expectation of an occasion presenting itself to obtain the reward of their toils ; but although, since

their entrance into Scotland, they had followed more closely, and watched the movements of the foe as narrowly as possible, without subjecting themselves to a discovery, it was not until they were within twenty miles of the modern Athens that a favourable opportunity occurred.

It was at a small town, or rather village, about the distance we have mentioned from the northern capital, that Lady Arlington, at rather an early hour in the day, made a halt for two reasons: one was to send an ‘*avant courier*’ to that city to give notice of her arrival to her cousin, that all things might be duly prepared for the reception of her ladyship; the other was, to have some necessary repairs done to the carriage, which had sustained some trifling damage, and was thereby disabled from proceeding immediately. By cautious enquiries, the count learnt, with delight, that the ladies were likely to be detained till the next day, by the disordered state of the vehicle; the truth of which was, that the inn-keeper, and the mender of springs and wheels, understood each other, and the ostler at the one place took care to put something out of order, that the artist at the other might at the same time get a job, and have an opportunity of returning his friend’s civility, by detaining the travellers one night at least. Regulating their actions by the information so adroitly obtained, our Quixote and his squire stopped their chaise at a farm-house, and proceeded on foot to the town, in order to reconnoitre: taking especial care to keep in ambuscade. Repeated disappointments had rendered the count almost hopeless, but this was destined to be the propitious moment; and

after several tedious hours of torturing suspense, he had the felicity of beholding Lady Arlington and Marian issue forth, and wend their way towards a romantic heath, whose wild beauties, glowing beneath the rays of an unclouded sun, gave promising hopes of tempting them to prolong their walk.

No sooner had they disappeared, than the count flew to the inn, and gave a note to the waiter, which he desired might be instantly delivered to the young lady, whose mamma was waiting for her upon the heath, whither he would have the pleasure of conducting her. He took this precaution lest some inquisitive person should act Mercury on the occasion, and convey the intelligence of his visit to Lady Arlington ; as his presence, so immediately upon her absence, might create a suspicion much better avoided.

Lavinia, who had excused herself from walking, on the plea of indisposition, which was no fiction, was sitting pensively, alone at a window, gazing, with tearful eyes, on the lovely prospect before her. Buried in her own sorrowful reflections, the blue mountains of the north elevated their haughty heads without giving birth to one sensation of delight, or attracting a single glance of admiration. An open book had dropped from her hand, and her thoughts were wandering to scenes of less sublimity than those by which she was surrounded, when the count's note and message were delivered to her.

What simile could present an adequate idea of the complete and instantaneous revolution that took

place in the mind of the maiden, on perusing these three faint lines !

In breathless agitation she desired to see the messenger, and, in another moment, was pressed to the beating heart of her adoring and now happy lover. With all the eloquence of romantic affection, he pleaded the cause that had actuated him in undertaking so bold an adventure. He exaggerated all the miseries she was going to encounter ; the dreary future that threatened, in the shape of a gloomy castle, in the midst of some uncultivated moor, surrounded by all the horrors of hard-hearted tyrants, and perpetual snow-drift, screaming wild birds, and dismal, ivy-mantled casements ; wrinkled, ill-humoured companions, and hated admirers.

Lavinia shuddered, her blood chilled in her veins ; and she felt that she would prefer a thousand deaths, to even a temporary banishment to such a place as this ; added to which, the dreadful anticipation of being forced into a marriage with the lord of one of these unattractive domains, which she had reason to believe was part of the plot, induced her to listen more readily to the over-drawn representations of her lover ; who, on the other hand, painted, in the most brilliant colours, and with all the natural ardour of a youthful and vivid imagination, the happiness of being united to one who adored her ; and, freed from the tyrannical restraint that had fettered her actions from childhood, fearlessly shine forth, one of the brightest luminaries of the admiring world.

“ Fly with me, my beloved Lavinia ! ” he exclaimed ; “ once my wife, who shall dare to separate

us? why do you hesitate, dearest? there is no time for deliberation — a few moments, and we may be deprived, for ever, of this opportunity — this very instant decides our fate; then do not resolve to sacrifice yourself and me. Oh! my beloved — do not delay — for I feel that if we part now, we shall never meet again."

This was, indeed, a cruel alternative; and as it is scarcely reasonable to expect the firmness of a Regulus in a girl of seventeen, it ought not to excite animadversion that she did not benefit by the example of that unflinching hero: thus, instead of proceeding quietly to the miserable fate that awaited her, she chose the more flowery path, and sought a refuge from oppression, in the arms of a fond, though imprudent lover.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LONDON ! three weeks after the dissolution of parliament—horrid idea ! extreme point of vulgarity ! the word ought to be expunged from the English language, at least for the ensuing three months, and the letters that compose it, looked upon as the plebeian members of the alphabet.

The honourable Tom Darnford, who was a man of fashion and extraordinary sensibility, always gave general orders to his steward to open all letters bearing the London post mark, after the twenty-fifth of July ; as they were sure to contain the importunities of impertinent tradesmen, or petitions from poor relations, neither of which were ever to be placed where they might annoy his fashionable optics.

It was at this dull season of the year, when the sun only shines on the streets, to keep them well aired in readiness for the return of the “beau monde ;” when the unusual appearance of a carriage at the West-end, is hailed with joy by the gaping shopkeepers, who have almost lost the art of addressing a customer for want of practice :

when the closed shutters, and dirty widows, of every house round every square, proclaim, in unequivocal terms, that the interiors are quite deserted, except by some ancient worthy, whose business it is to take care of the covered-up furniture, and prevent the rats and mice from making inroads upon the state.

It was in this season of universal tranquillity that a youthful husband, with his blooming bride, entered, in a travelling chaise, the precincts of Grosvenor Square, escorted by a gallant cavalier, whose aid had greatly facilitated the success of the bridegroom's matrimonial expedition.

The party proceeded immediately to Bransby-house, which, like all other houses of a certain grade, had elevated its shutters, and accumulated the ordinary quantity of dust on the uncleansed steps and window frames.

Lavinia surveyed these outward signs of inward vacuum, and was rather relieved by the certainty that she should encounter no cold looks, nor frowning brows at present; which respite, though it could be but a short one, removed a little of the weight from her heart, and she entered the house with lightened spirits, and revived courage.

The spacious apartments, divested of all their splendid decorations, presented but a desolate appearance; and shewed, at the first glance, the impossibility of remaining there, even till the following day. What was to be done? Lord Bransby, it is true, had left a brief, and rather angry note, addressed to the Count de Léal, containing a positive injunction to follow him, without delay, into Derbyshire.

But the count could not leave his young wife, and it was equally impossible to take her with him, uncertain what kind of reception she might meet with. On Osselin, therefore, devolved the difficult and unpleasant task of going first to his lordship, on a special embassy, to endeavour to arrange the affair as amicably as possible, and smoothe the way for the appearance of the rash pair in their newly assumed characters.

This plan arranged, the next thing to consider was, how to dispose of themselves in the mean time, for the funds of both gentlemen were nearly exhausted, and to obtain a fresh supply it was necessary to apply to Lord Bransby, which could not be done on the instant; besides which, Lavinia's wardrobe was in Scotland, a no less serious inconvenience.

In this embarrassing state of affairs, she wrote to her aunts at Islington, from whom she received a much kinder reply than she had expected, containing an invitation for herself and the count, whom they expressed themselves impatient to see.

One great cause of this condescension on the part of the old ladies, was their tenacious memories, which had treasured up, with an eye to balancing accounts at some future period, the look of disappointment with which Lady Arlington and her daughter discovered that aunt Jeanie was not on the point of terminating her mortal career, on that memorable night when they were deceived into making a trip to Islington.

The stolen marriage of Lavinia presented an excellent opportunity for revenge, and the aunts resolved to take up the cause warmly against mamma

and sister. Lavinia was already a favourite, and the count, by his amiable manners, and pleasing attentions, so won upon their hearts, that they not only promised assistance in any future pecuniary difficulties, but relieved them from the present embarrassment, that would have placed them in a very awkward predicament, had they not received such timely aid.

As soon as Osselin had seen them comfortably established in furnished apartments, he took his way northward, promising to give them the very earliest possible intelligence of the result of his mission ; and immediately after his departure, Lavinia wrote to her brother, who was still at Brighton, and all that remained now was to wait patiently till his arrival in town, or a summons from Lord Bransby should alter the face of affairs, and give some idea of what the future would produce.

CHAPTER XXIV.

NEAR the beautiful and romantic heights of the Derby Peak, embosomed in an extensive plantation and shrubbery, almost hidden by the perfumed jasmin which clung around it, stood a cottage, whose latticed windows and general appearance, while they betokened a love of retirement, also betrayed an air of refinement sufficient to prove that some degree of affluence appertained to its occupant. Every care had evidently been bestowed to make it a charming retreat; and there was an air of romance around it well calculated to satisfy the poetical mind.

It was a mild and beautiful autumn evening, when the golden sun had nearly run his destined course, and was fast sinking to his western couch, gilding with his parting ray the mountain tops; when a gentle step was heard, stealing softly through the plantation we have alluded to, and the fairy form of a most lovely girl, apparently not more than nineteen, passed the leafy barrier, and, evidently anxious to avoid observation from the

dwelling, approached, by a circuitous route, the summer house at the extremity of the grounds.

“Henry!” said the lovely wanderer, tapping at the window of the little building; “Henry, dear!” her voice sounding soft as the note of the bulbul.

“I am here, dearest!” was the reply, in a deeper tone, and the next moment the quickly unclosed door admitted the fair visitant.

“My Adelaide; you have been long in coming; what has detained you till so late an hour?”

“Nay, if you look so angry, I will not remain with you:” said the damsel, half pettishly: but the offender kissed away the hovering frown, which was instantaneously lost amid smiles and blushes.

“And now, my sweet girl,” he said, “tell me, I entreat you, wherefore I am obliged to meet you thus secretly?”

“Because —— oh! Henry — I scarcely know how to tell you.”

“I guess the reason!” he replied hastily; “it is Talbot who is opposed to my visits! — he likes not that I should see you; — tell me, — is it not so?”

Adelaide was silent.

“And think you this will deter me?” he continued; “does my Adelaide imagine that I will conceal myself, or shrink from the presence of a rival, as though I dared not support my pretensions? But perhaps his mother will prohibit my admittance, since my wishes interfere with those of her son.”

“Oh! no — you wrong her, Henry, — indeed you are unjust in this; she will not recal the words of approbation she has spoken, even though

she may now wish it were otherwise. Oh ! Henry, you know not what I feel to grieve her thus. I could almost give up even you to make her happy."

" Ah ! Adelaide ; I fear it would not have cost you much to transfer your affections, or the possibility of so doing would never, even for an instant, have occurred to your imagination."

" That sentiment came not from your heart ; said the maiden ; " I never dreamed of transferring my affections ; I felt, only, that I was giving pain to her whose pleasure ought to be my study, and it seemed to me that I was acting ungratefully : but your image was still present to my mind, and I told her all."

" My own sweetest Adelaide ! But what did she say ? did she support the suit of Talbot very warmly ?"

" No — she is too good to put any constraint upon my inclinations, and only urges this one point ; that you will refrain from visiting the cottage for a short time, at least : comply with this request, dear Henry, I implore you ; the term of your banishment will but be short, as Talbot will soon leave us ; and, until then, I can see you here, as I do now."

" And why must this be so ?"

" I scarcely know — and yet I think that my mother, (for so I always must call her) fears that some dissension might arise between you and her son, were you to meet at present. Promise me that you will not come ?"

" If you command it, I must submit : but, my own Adelaide, why not consent to place it beyond the power of any mortal to dispute my right to your

affections ? a few short months, and all obstacles to our union will be removed ; let us then anticipate the blissful moment ; it would relieve my mind from a weight of care, could I once make you irrevocably mine ; for I am now tortured incessantly by the fears of separation from you — by doubt, and wretchedness.”

“ Is it that you doubt my love ? ” said Adelaide ; “ you need not, for it will never change. But do not again speak to me on this subject. Mrs. Talbot, as you well know, has been my best, and only friend. She took me, a poor deserted orphan, and has reared me as her own child to this moment, with all the tenderness of a mother — I have not a wish, or a thought unknown to her — why should I, indeed, since she is ever anxious to gratify my wishes ? Then what would be her opinion of me ? what would you think of me yourself — if I were to repay all these benefits with so unpardonable a breach of confidence and gratitude ? I never will marry unknown to her.”

Henry was compelled by his better feelings to yield to sentiments, dictated by goodness of heart ; and, after a few tender adieus, and a promise to return on the following evening, he mounted his horse, which, apparently sympathizing with his master, bore him slowly from the spot where all his hopes of happiness remained ; while Adelaide, with equal tardiness, retraced her steps to the cottage.

But the mind of the lover, as the distance between him and his beloved encreased, became, gradually, more and more uneasy. Deception was a vice foreign to his nature ; yet had he been led by untoward events to practise it on all around him —

on those who, from boyhood, had been the confidants of his most trifling secrets — on the friends who had the strongest claims to his affection and good faith — on her who, young, artless and confiding, had entrusted all her happiness to his keeping, and even on himself.

“ What a detestable part am I acting,” he mentally exclaimed ; “ thus, under an assumed name, to have gained the affection of this lovely girl, who, when she discovers the truth, will despise me as an unprincipled deceiver : and am I not so ? — why did I not throw off the chain long ago ? — Into what a labyrinth of difficulties have I plunged myself !

“ Whatever course I now pursue must be to act dishonourably — Oh ! inconsiderate parents, what have ye not to answer for, who deprive your children of that freedom which is their right by all the laws of nature ! — Had I been left at liberty, as other men are, to follow the bent of my own inclinations, I should have escaped the censures of the world — the reproaches of my own heart. Detested gold ! thou shalt no longer stand between me and peace — my resolution is taken, and shall be speedily executed, for it will not be possible to sustain this character much longer.”

Resolving in his mind such thoughts as these, did Lionel Bransby pursue his way towards Beechwood hall, the beautiful and ancient seat of Lord Bransby.

It was at the cottage of Mrs. Talbot that he had passed those days of absence, by which so much uneasiness had been caused to his father : it was there, under an assumed name, he had sought, in

the society of that amiable lady and her interesting protégée, the happiness he failed to find at his own home, where heart and mind and person seemed in perpetual bondage.

It was there he gave to the obscure and portionless Adelaide, the heart, so cold and insensible to her who should have possessed it; the accomplished, graceful, rich and high born girl, for whom so many had sighed in vain. There is nothing in which it is so impossible to judge for another, as in the choice of a wife or husband. It is not beauty, it is not wit — it is not accomplishments, nor any grace of mind or person, capable of being described, that fixes the heart.

The mal-apropos arrival of Talbot had tended to hurry Lionel to an explanation he would willingly have delayed for some time longer; for, although he had resolved upon breaking his contract with Lady Caroline, his mind had not yet organized any plan, by which to effect honourably, so difficult an emancipation. In introducing himself, under a fictitious character at the cottage, he was actuated by two motives: the first was, that though they were unacquainted with his person, his name was so well known throughout the county, and so constantly coupled with his approaching marriage, which was looked forward to with anxiety by the peasantry, as a time of holiday and rejoicing, that he could not have offered himself as a suitor to the captivating Adelaide, in his own proper person: the second was, that in the character of Henry Manby he had held out no splendid prospects, had dazzled her by no brilliant promises of future grandeur: for he had, in idea, compromised with his

conscience, by sacrificing ambition to inclination ; and thought he might at once preserve his honour and happiness, by marrying Adelaide, and rendering up the greater part of his own fortune to indemnify Lady Caroline, in some measure, for the sacrifice of hers, which, in this case, was inevitable. Such was the chimerical foundation upon which his schemes were built, when the unwelcome appearance of Talbot threatened to overthrow the whole fabric.

Talbot's attachment to Adelaide, which, on account of her extreme youth, had not, at the time of his departure for India, assumed a serious form, now took a different character ; and his affectionate mother, who had not foreseen this consequence, alarmed for the peace of her only son, now repented of having so readily admitted Henry into the family circle ; but repentance came too late — Adelaide's heart had been given — her love returned — her whole soul devoted to one dear, one only object ; and Talbot had no alternative but to call philosophy to his aid, and endeavour to support his disappointment.

Philosophy, however, is more easily preached, than practised ; and the dejected lover spent whole days in wandering among the wild and woody scenes with which that part of the country abounds.

Orlando-like, he carved the name of Adelaide on the trees ; he breathed it to the winds ; and wood, and vale, mountain, and stream, heard the murmurings of his hopeless passion.

Time, however, is a better physician than Mr. St. John Long, and has been *tried* more frequently ; the mind of Talbot began to yield considerably to

its influence, as his good sense soon pointed out the inutility of rendering himself miserable by the pursuit of an unattainable object. Besides, he had some portion of that pride which governs all women, and some men, prompting them to return indifference with a similar feeling, and reserve their love for those who can appreciate and repay it.

We all have some opinion of our own merits, and we like other people to be sensible of them too.

CHAPTER XXV.

“ I INFINITELY prefer Beechwood to Grosvenor Square,” said Louise, looking from the windows of a large old fashioned dining parlour, down the long avenue, that led to the park gates. “ How delightful it must have been, in the ‘ olden time,’ when the industrious British dames were used to spend their lives in their ancient castles, with their maidens around them, spinning, working tapestry, and other sublimities. Oh ! that I had been born in those days of notability !”

“ If you have no other reason to be dissatisfied with your present existence, my dear,” said Lady Hamilton, laughing, “ that cause may be easily removed ; since there cannot be the slightest objection to your also engaging in such desirable occupations, if your inclinations have such a tendency, although you were not the mistress of an ancient castle, some five hundred years ago.”

“ And for maidens of whom to sit in the midst,” said Lady Caroline, “ there is I, and Emily, and Miss Moreland——”

“ Me !” screamed Miss Moreland, — “ I would

not, for the universe, be concerned in such antediluvian barbarisms!"

"Barbarisms!" repeated Louise, "I assure you, Miss Moreland, it would not be so very intolerable, with all the etceteras. I would have the castle filled with gallant knights, and warriors bold,—we would be Omphales in the midst of disarmed Herculeses."

"I certainly am rather partial to the military," simpered Miss Moreland, her ideas taking a retrograde motion, and fixing themselves on the gay uniform of Major Dufforth.

"Then Lady Caroline Gresham, as future mistress of Beechwood Hall, may probably have an opportunity of gratifying your taste in that particular, by persuading the Mayor of Derby, to post a sentinel at the gate: what a fine effect his red uniform would have, contrasted with the evergreens around him."

"Other people may be mistresses of other halls and evergreens," said Miss Moreland significantly.

"And of scarlet uniforms too," added Louise; and was proceeding, but the entrance of Lionel at this juncture, put a stop to the conversation.

The young ladies were much disappointed that he was unable to give them any information of the absentees; as their only hope of gaining the desired intelligence was from him, for they knew Lord Bransby had, by some means been made acquainted with the proceedings of those young gentlemen, which information he had not deemed it prudent or necessary to communicate to his family; and curiosity, the passion said to be exclusively ours,

was mixed with anxiety lest any misfortune had befallen them.

Louise was still remaining at the window, looking out upon the distant prospect, when a horseman entered the park gates, and came galloping up the avenue.

“ He’s here — he’s here — Mr. Vassor ! ” exclaimed Louise.

“ Thank God ! ” fervently ejaculated Lady Caroline.

Every one turned to her with looks of the utmost surprise, and she was, herself, much confused at the involuntary exclamation, that had so unguardedly, and with such marked emphasis, escaped her lips.

“ Mr. Vassor would doubtless, be peculiarly happy, if he were aware that he excited so much solicitude,” said Lionel gravely.

The entrance of Osselin prevented any further observation ; he was covered with dust, and much heated by the speed with which he had performed his journey ; and to the enquiries that were poured upon him from all quarters, with regard to the count, he only replied that he was quite well, but detained in town by very particular and unexpected business.

Being desirous of an immediate interview with Lord Bransby ; Osselin, with all the courage he could summon to his aid, (which, in the present instance, was by no means very abundant) approached the library door, which he opened with much more deliberation than was his general custom ; he entertained the highest respect for his

venerable guardian, and this was the first time he had approached him with a fear of not being received with pleasure, which, on a heart so sensitively alive to every impression, produced a depressing effect. Although conscious of having merited the marked alteration that was visible in the countenance and deportment of the earl, Osselin could not but feel deeply mortified at the cold and stern look with which his entrance was greeted.

A silent inclination of the head was all the notice bestowed on him; and if his spirit sank ere he came into the presence of his judge, it utterly failed him now, that he saw how entirely he had fallen under his displeasure.

“I fear, my lord,” at length stammered out the young gentleman, after a considerable pause, “I fear, my lord, you are excessively displeased.”

Lord Bransby laid aside his book, leaned back in his chair, and without attempting to address, in any shape, the embarrassed youth, merely signified by a slight inclination of the head, his disposition to hear any thing he might have to communicate.

This persevering taciturnity was not at all agreeable to Osselin; who was quite at a loss what to do or say; he knew not how much was known, or what he yet had to communicate which might have been some guide; but deprived of this advantage by the silence of his lordship, he determined, with more policy than he usually displayed, to adopt a circuitous mode of coming to the actual state of his guardian’s feelings, which it was desirable to ascertain, ere he proceeded to frame his own excuse. With this view he said—

“Perhaps, my lord, I ought not, under the pre-

sent circumstances, to have intruded, without permission, into your presence."

"Mr. Vassor, you will never, under any circumstances, be refused admission to me," said the earl, coldly.

"You are very good, my lord—too good—" another awful pause succeeded, which Osselin had not courage to break; when at length, to his infinite relief, it was terminated by Lord Bransby.

"It is impossible to express how much I have been hurt at your conduct, Mr. Vassor, as well as at that of the Count de Léal, from whom, more particularly, I expected a greater degree of confidence, in return for the many years of anxious care I have bestowed upon him. From you, sir, whose connection with me has been of more recent date, perhaps I have no right to look for more than the deference due to the guardian chosen for you by that excellent protector whom it was your misfortune to lose."

Osselin was much affected.

"You come now, I presume," continued the earl, "to tell me that the count is married."

"How! my lord—is it possible that you are already informed of that circumstance?"

"You perceive that I am so, sir; and although, it is true, I have no longer any legal control over his actions, I certainly did not anticipate that the first use he would make of the liberty his age has given him would be an unworthy one: nevertheless, I am ready to hear whatever you have to offer in extenuation of the imprudence, to give it no harsher term, of which he has been guilty, and in which you, I am grieved to say, have taken so active a part."

A moment's reflection sufficed to convince Osselin that they had been followed to Scotland, and that this could only have been done by De Tracey. Eager to seize the slightest pretext for renewing hostilities with that gentleman, his fiery imagination magnified this circumstance into a serious injury ; and he inwardly vowed to take the earliest opportunity of obtaining satisfaction for the various insults he considered himself to have received from that gentleman. Suppressing, however, for the present, these emotions of revenge, he began to plead the cause of the Count, with all the eloquence of which he was possessed ; and Lord Bransby, after listening to him with great attention, replied —

“ Your reasoning might, perhaps, satisfy the world, in general ; but what can I say to his father ? what can I say to the illustrious, but unfortunate family of which he is the representative, and which has looked forward to being restored, through his means, to its original splendour ? This premature marriage will destroy the hopes of years ; as it is an impassable barrier to a young man's advancement in the road that was marked out for the count ; and will, indeed, be a bitter disappointment to those who have made unlimited sacrifices to ensure the cultivation of his talents, for which they are rewarded by the destruction of expectations so long cherished, so cruelly overthrown.”

“ But, sir, your influence may do much towards effecting a reconciliation, and the count relies most humbly on your goodness.”

“ My disapprobation of his conduct will certainly not prevent me from acting now, as it has ever been

my study to do, for his benefit; if he has not profited by my exertions, the fault rests not with me, though I deeply regret it. Would to God, I could undo the act of folly that has blighted all his prospects in the bud! But as this cannot be, it is my duty, as far as I possess the power, to mitigate its evil consequences."

"I trust, sir, the consequences will not be so unhappy as you seem to apprehend."

"The consequences of disobedience and deception cannot be otherwise."

"Those are harsh words, my lord."

"They are not the less true; and it is not the least part of his guilt, that he has withdrawn an inexperienced girl, yet a mere child, from the protection of her friends, to plunge her into the difficulties that must inevitably arise from his inability to give her an establishment suitable to her rank, or support her with any degree of comfort."

"My lord, the act itself was undoubtedly wrong; I do not attempt to defend it; but it sprang from amiable motives."

"It sprang from a mad and momentary passion, by which reason and reflection have been set at defiance. But though the count was in love, and thus blinded to the result of his folly, you, Mr. Vassor, cannot plead the same excuse."

"I do not presume to offer an excuse, sir; I meant not to defend my conduct; I came here to acknowledge my fault, and to solicit your pardon. I hope you will believe me, my lord, when I say, that however thoughtless my actions may have been, my heart has never admitted a thought derogatory to the respect, and, permit me to say, the affection

your unceasing kindness has inspired me with; you have condescended to treat me as a son; believe me, dear sir, I honour and love you as a father. May I hope for your forgiveness of my first, and, as I trust it will prove, my only serious offence: Do you pardon me?"

Tears rolled down the venerable cheeks of Lord Bransby as he extended his hand to Osselin—who quitted the library with very different sensations from those with which he had entered it, feeling more sorry for his conduct than he thought he could have been, and wishing that he had been less hasty in aiding a plan which, perhaps, might ultimately be the cause of much misery.

There are few hearts proof against a mild remonstrance; few that do not rebel against severity.

When Osselin had left the room, Lord Bransby desired an immediate interview with Lady Hamilton. This amiable woman was inexpressibly surprised at the count's marriage; but as ladies generally look on such transgressions with a lenient eye, the result of the long conference between her and the earl was, that the latter should write to town to invite the count and his young bride to Beechwood.

Osselin had retired to his room, occupied with various reflections on the morning's occurrences: his interview with Lord Bransby had terminated more favourably than he had ventured to anticipate; and his mind, at ease on that subject, had leisure to be disturbed by the interference of De Tracey, which in his heart, he did not regret, as it afforded him a sufficient ground of quarrel in ad-

dition to the difference that had taken place at Barnet, and he only awaited a seasonable opportunity of making him answer for what he was pleased to consider the numberless injuries he had heaped upon him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON the following morning Lionel rode over to the cottage, and, no less to his surprise than delight, found Adelaide alone. Talbot had wisely withdrawn himself for awhile, to try the effect of absence in restoring his spirits to their proper tone.

Adelaide possessed but few of those accomplishments that are requisite “pour faire un grand éclat.” It was her natural graces, her artlessness and simplicity, her unpretending beauty, by which the heart of Lionel had first been won : it was her innate goodness, her gentle temper, and well-regulated mind, that had secured his love.

Perhaps, too, it was the striking contrast she formed to all that he had been accustomed to from infancy.

The very absence of beauty may become a charm where the eye has been satiated ; and brilliant acquirements, when we are inundated with them, cease to be attractive. No impartial judge could compare Lady Caroline with Adelaide, without yielding to the former an immeasurable superiority, both in personal attraction and mental accom-

plishment; yet, for his ear, the simple song of his unsophisticated love possessed more enchantment than the highly-cultivated voice of the noble maiden: and he would sit by her for hours, listening with rapture to her plaintive airs, accompanied by the guitar, which she touched with more taste than science.

Lionel was more than usually thoughtful, and the anxious eye of Adelaide quickly discovered that he was so; but to all her affectionate inquiries he merely replied, that "nothing had happened to disturb him, though he felt rather more serious than usual."

"Shall I sing to you, Henry?"

"Do, love—but let it be something melancholy—it will suit me best just now, for I am not inclined to be gay."

She took her guitar, and sung with great feeling the following stanzas.

"The mourner ceased to weep
O'er the pale form of the mother,
As he turned to where, in sleep,
Lay the dear-bought one — the other,
The pledge she left behind,
The looked-for, tender token,
To soothe the anguished mind,
To heal the heart half broken.

He thought that helpless form,
Unless by him 't were tended,
Would be cast to meet life's storm,
Unprotected, unbefriended.
And the mourner ceased to weep
O'er the pale form of the mother,
That he might his vigil keep
O'er the days of that young other."

Lionel had seated himself by her, and was almost unconsciously playing with the beautiful ringlets, which, unconfined, floated with the light breeze of the morning; and was gazing on her with a look of the most impassioned fondness, when suddenly the door, which led into the garden, was opened, and Sir Charles Freemantle, unannounced, entered the room.

Not that Sir Charles had trod on air, or passed the windows like a disembodied spirit, without casting his shadow upon them: on the contrary, his boots had performed a sort of creaking overture, up to the very minute of his reaching the entrance, in which the jingling of his spurs was particularly conspicuous.

It is evident that our lovers did not at that moment possess the quick sense of hearing that distinguished the geese of the Capitol, when, unlike the usage of modern times, a whole city was *saved* by a *quack*, or something resembling it.

“Here’s a pretty situation!” thought Lionel, who, in his heart, at that moment, wished Sir Charles at the bottom of the sea; — “What shall I do now?”

But there was no time to consider of this; for the gentleman in question feeling rather awkward at finding that he had made so inopportune an *entrée*, after doing the polite to Adelaide, overwhelmed her with astonishment by addressing her lover, not as the obscure individual she had always imagined him to be, but as the heir of a rich and powerful nobleman.

“I was not at all aware,” said Sir Charles, addressing Lionel, “that my friend Talbot was known to you.”

“ I am entirely unacquainted with Mr. Talbot,” replied Lionel, rather stiffly.

“ Indeed !” said Sir Charles, looking with surprise from Lionel to Adelaide; and beginning to suspect that he had “ committed a trespass,” he became anxious to make his retreat. Without, therefore, attempting any further parley, where it was evident all parties were ill at ease, he, with great affectation of *nonchalance* (and it was affectation, for he *did* feel curious) left some commonplace message for Talbot, said he would have the honour of calling at Beechwood on the following day, and took his leave.

“ So much for the hopes of my poor friend Talbot !” thought Sir Charles ; “ and this is the artless Adelaide — this is she who is all simplicity — all nature ! — Egad ! all nature I verily believe it is — for vanity and deception is born with them. Oh ! woman — woman — ye are all alike ; and each day furnishes me with fresh proofs to support my opinion. When Talbot is absent, his place is supplied, and by whom ? by a man who is on the point of becoming the husband of another woman ; which other, no doubt, while he is passing his leisure moments with the pretty girl at the cottage, is perfectly content to amuse herself in his absence, by listening complacently to the flattery of any one who chooses to offer up that ever-acceptable incense. A man is worse than mad to rest his hopes of happiness on such ground ; I will never trust mine to the keeping of such treacherous guardians, unless, indeed ” — and he took out the last letter he had received from his unknown, proving that, like the rest of the world, he thought every body’s folly worse than his own.

Sir Charles's departure had aroused Adelaide from the stupor into which the discovery he had been the means of making had thrown her ; and bursting into tears, she reproached Lionel for the deception he had practised. Folding her in his arms—he kissed away the pearly drops that trickled down her cheeks—and besought her to be calm ; pleading, in extenuation of his fault, the warmth and sincerity of his affection, and his fixed determination never, under any circumstances, to unite himself with Lady Caroline Gresham.

“ Surely,” said the agitated Lionel, making an effort to appear calm, “ surely I cannot be accused either of crime or folly, in refusing to become the husband to a girl whose affections I have never possessed ; and if I am content to purchase happiness at the price of that splendour which has never been to me the source of one moment’s pleasure or peace, why should I be prevented from doing so ? why should I sacrifice all I hold dear in the world, to obtain that which I do not value ? The sweetest moments of my life have been passed under this roof, beloved, with you ; then why should not its whole course flow on in the same blissful stream ? I am resolved, my Adelaide, to adopt the only means in my power of extricating myself from the wearying bondage that has embittered my past life ; and if you, my only love, were willing to share my humble fortunes, when, under another name, I sought and won you, why should you scruple now, since nothing is changed but the mere appellation of him whose lot will still be the same obscure one, though his pretensions may be greater ?”

With such arguments as these did Lionel at length succeed in soothing the agitated girl; but when the hour of parting came, she felt that he was doubly dear to her, now that she feared to lose him: and if in her hours of security she had never parted from him but with sorrow, how was that sorrow encreased by the dread of being compelled to separate from him for ever. She had never loved him half so fondly as at this moment, when the discovery of his rank seemed to place a barrier between them.

Lionel approached Beechwood with a heavy heart, and the necessity for an immediate explanation weighed down his spirits to the lowest depth of dejection. In the presence of Adelaide he had forgotten every thing but his love; but when left to the full force of his own meditations — when he reflected on the death-blow he was about to give to the long-cherished hopes of his kind father, his feelings became insupportably painful. In this miserable state of mind, to rest was impossible; and he paced his room the whole night, revolving every circumstance, till his brain throbbed with intense exertion. Thought only served to place his own actions, and their probable consequences, in a more unsatisfactory point of view; and, without having taken one instant's repose, he descended to the breakfast-room, where his pale cheek, and heavy eye, created an infinite degree of alarm. Notwithstanding his repeated assurances of being in perfect health, a thousand remedies were prescribed for him, and a number of delicacies offered to tempt his appetite — but in vain.

“ Lionel has perhaps seen a ghost,” said Louise, anxious to relieve her brother from importunities which, however kindly meant, she saw were troublesome to him; “ no gothic mansion could ever preserve its character without an apparition.”

“ There can never be an absence of spirits where you are, my dear sister.”

“ Ah! but mine are not evil ones, unless they sometimes happen to be a little troublesome, when folks are not in a merry mood.”

“ A case with which you are, happily, almost unacquainted,” said Lady Hamilton.

“ True, my dear aunt; though I anticipate my share of the melancholies some of these unlucky days! *mais, en attendant* — who is inclined to walk to the waterfalls?”

All present expressed a desire to go, except Lady Hamilton, and Lionel, who excused himself on the plea of being much fatigued, by having taken too long a ride on the preceding day: and he found an opportunity of saying, in a low voice, to Lady Caroline, “ If you are not very anxious to walk this morning, I wish to see you alone.”

So extraordinary a request filled her with wonder and curiosity; as, generally, so far from wishing for a tête-à-tête conversation, he carefully avoided any thing like a private interview. Indeed if, by accident, they were ever left alone, he appeared impatient, and vexed at it. To solicit, therefore, so particular an audience, foreboded something important, and she rather anxiously awaited the departure of the pedestrians, to solve the mystery.

Left alone with Lady Caroline, Lionel made several fruitless attempts to enter upon the subject that

occupied his whole soul ; and every moment of delay seemed to increase the difficulty of commencing it : he rose, and took two or three hasty turns across the apartment ; while his flushed cheek, quivering lip, and the visible agitation of his whole frame, oppressed the mind of his expectant auditor with a fear that some very terrible communication was about to be made.

“ Has any accident happened, Mr. Bransby ? for heaven’s sake tell me what is the matter ! ”

“ Nothing — nothing material has occurred,” said he, seating himself by her, and making a strong effort to compose his feelings : “ forgive me if I have had so little command over myself as to occasion you unnecessary alarm.” — He paused ; then perceiving that her looks were expressive of much anxiety to learn to what result this extraordinary commencement would lead ; he again began — again hesitated : at length, starting up, he exclaimed — “ By heaven ! I cannot do it ! ”

“ Let me entreat you to explain your meaning,” said Lady Caroline, impassionately, — “ I cannot bear this torturing suspense ; it is a thousand times more dreadful than any thing you can have to tell me.”

“ I have imposed the task on myself,” said Lionel, “ and I will perform it ; but first tell me candidly, and it is a question that I feel I have a right to ask — have I ever possessed the least share of your affection ? ”

She hesitated some moments ; then replied, in a tremulous voice — “ In obedience to my father’s will, I have endeavoured — I have always duly ap-

preciated your many amiable qualities — I esteem you — but — ”

“ But you do not love me ? ” She was silent. “ I know you do not — I have long known it ; and it is from this conviction I feel that — I do not mean to wound your delicacy, dear Lady Caroline, but I feel that it will not be for the happiness of either of us that — ”

“ Briefly, Mr. Bransby, you wish to say that it will be better for us both to be free ? ”

“ Can you pardon me ? ” exclaimed Lionel ; and, overcome by the unusual excitement of his feelings, he threw himself on his knees at her feet. She tried to calm his spirits by assuring him that this candid avowal of his sentiments had afforded infinite relief to her mind ; for she had long cherished the idea that it would promote their mutual happiness to free themselves from the contract by which they were enslaved.

“ You may dismiss all scruples on my account,” she added, “ for I have thought deeply on this subject, and you have now only anticipated my sincere wishes : we may be friends, Lionel, but we never could be lovers ; and to unite ourselves for life, would be to make each other wretched. It is not in our power to command our own inclinations on this point ; and I am more gratified by this frank disclosure, than if you had professed an affection that you did not feel. I can with cheerfulness submit to the penalty that must follow this voluntary act, since I am convinced that a fortune, however ample it may be, is insufficient to give happiness where affection does not exist.”

“Generous, noble-minded girl!” exclaimed Lionel, whose heart was lightened of half the weight that had oppressed it. “But do not believe me capable of such base selfishness; since mine is the fault, mine must, in justice, be the forfeit. My arrangements are already made to that effect. I care little for property—still less for rank; and as there must be a surrender of these, it shall be made by me.”

“It is impossible—it cannot, and shall not be,” replied Lady Caroline: “consider, you are the sole representative of a noble family, whose dignity it is incumbent on you to support; this is an imperative duty, and ought not to depend on your own private wishes and inclinations: you have no right, therefore, to diminish your fortune, since it is not only to your own prejudice that this would be done, but to that of your friends and family. I have no such considerations to influence me, and I am securing my own future peace by merely foregoing the title to an inheritance of which I cannot feel the deprivation, having never experienced the possession.”

Lionel was greatly affected by the noble sentiments of the generous girl, but his resolution was unaltered by them; and, ere the conclusion of this conference, he had confessed his attachment to Adelaide, and his intention of living retired from the world; which romantic plan was warmly opposed by Lady Caroline, who expressed, in unaffected terms, her sincere satisfaction at having removed the obstacle that had impeded his union with her he really loved.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ONE of the most romantic walks in Derbyshire is that from Beechwood to the waterfalls, but it is somewhat intricate to those who are not well acquainted with it.

“ Which road are we to take ?” said Osselin.

“ The north road,” replied Louise, to whom he had addressed himself — “ I believe you do not object to *that direction* ?”

“ Certainly not, with you for a companion, Miss Bransby ; but it is far too chilly to attempt alone.”

“ Oh ! I am the worst traveller in the world, and have had a decided antipathy to journeying northward ever since Captain Parry’s expedition ; so, if Mr. Vassor should ever feel inclined to take a trip on his own account, he must make a better choice.”

“ Rather say a less dangerous one — for I almost doubt my own courage to undertake so desperate an enterprise, which might be followed by a second Trojan war.”

“ No fear of that, since there is no Menelaus in the case.”

“ Your Helen is willing to remove all obstacles to the attempt at such an exploit,” said Emily, laughing.

“ But that is not easily to be done ;” replied Osselin ; “ the resentment of *one* husband is by no means so formidable as that of a *myriad* of lovers.”

“ You shall not be my knight ;” said Louise, gaily ; — “ It is not the province of true gallantry to magnify danger ; and when I select a hero, he shall have sufficient valour to hold the venture light, unless rendered worthy of him by its thousand and one difficulties.”

“ Nay, nay,” said Osselin, “ you do me great injustice. As far as an odd dragon, a three-headed giant, or a fiery serpent may go, I am quite at your service. But to attack all the world at once, is rather too serious an affair to be undertaken, without first bestowing some consideration upon it ; and even were I to come off conqueror, my only reward might possibly be, after having dispatched all your lovers, to remain the last man.”

“ I thank you for your gallantry, Mr. Vassor ; but I hope it will never be put to so cruel a test ; for if I were the means of causing so dreadful a depopulation, I should certainly be considered a sort of plague, and placed under perpetual quarantine.”

“ I should be very sorry,” said Osselin, laughing, “ to be on the preventive service on such an occasion ; for I have no doubt, a smile or two, or an irresistible glance, would be continually smuggled ashore, and infect the whole country, which would be especially dangerous to me, *the last man*.”

“Smuggling,” said Louise, rather ironically, “would in all probability become very common; if those appointed to prevent it, were themselves in the habit of coveting that *which is forbidden*; and of trying to obtain it, *without duty*.”

Osselin crimsoned at this speech, which seemed levelled at his attention to Lady Caroline Gresham; when fortunately the appearance of Major Dufforth, with two other gentlemen, relieved him from the embarrassing necessity of making a reply to this mischievous satire of his fair antagonist.

The major and his companions, Sir Charles Freemantle and Mr. Talbot, were on horseback, but they dismounted, and dismissing their servants, joined the pedestrians, to whom Talbot was introduced.

“Upon my word, Mr. Vassor, you are superlatively blest,” said Dufforth; “quite ‘au grand Seigneur,’ but I hope your reign is almost over; as, with permission, we will partake in the pleasures of your promenade.”

“Oh! major,” said Osselin, “I do but hold the high office in trust; and, all unworthy as I am, unhesitatingly resign my ill supported dignity to abler hands.” And seizing this favourable opportunity, he prayed to be excused from further attendance on pretence of wishing to write to the Count de Léal—the plea was admitted, and he returned to the hall, while the ladies pursued their walk under this new escort.

“We were coming to pay our respects at Beechwood,” said Sir Charles, addressing Louise; “It was but yesterday we heard of your arrival.”

“Beechwood would have been much honoured,”

she replied, "particularly as Sir Charles Fremantle so seldom deigns to show the light of his countenance."

"So faint a light would appear to great disadvantage, where the sun is ever shining," he replied with a bow.

"If compliments, like gems, are valuable, according to their scarcity, yours must be above all price, Sir Charles."

"A proof of my good policy, Miss Bransby, since it is only by the fact of being seldom met with, that either myself or my compliments obtain any degree of consideration."

"Your modesty, at least, ought not to be overlooked; modesty is far too estimable to be slightly regarded."

"Not on account of its rarity, I hope?" said Sir Charles; "though I believe it is not generally very highly prized in our sex; do you consider it a very attractive quality?"

"Most certainly," replied Louise, "but I do not mean that sort of bashfulness, improperly termed modesty, that would impel a man to take shelter behind any one taller than himself, and only creep out when likely to be unobserved."

"To what length, then, would you allow a man's modesty to go?"

"As far as to prevent him from thinking that every woman who looks on, must necessarily admire him."

"Which of us is that meant for?" said the major, looking round.

"A random shot," answered Louise; "if it

touched either of you, it was quite accidental on my part, I assure you."

"I am unhurt," said Sir Charles, evidently much amused with the easy careless mirth of Louise, whose spirits rose in proportion to the pleasure he appeared to take in conversing with her.

Talbot, in the mean time, was engaged in a more serious discussion with Emily, in whom he found an interesting, and pleasing companion; her quiet manners, and rational style of conversation, being more in unison with his taste, than the brilliant sparkling of wit, without solidity. Thus the poor major had no alternative but to be excessively gallant to Miss Moreland, who, silent as she had been till then, began to exert her rhetorical powers, for his entertainment and edification.

In this order they entered a shady lane, bounded on one side by a woody plantation, and, on the other, by a hedge where wild roses blossomed in great profusion: it was high, and separated the lane from a field; but although sufficiently thick to conceal the person of any one on the other side, it did not prevent any sound from being distinctly heard.

A solemn noise, as of some one reading aloud, arrested the attention of the party in the lane, who walked on as quietly as possible, till they were near enough to distinguish the voice of the speaker, which was not unfamiliar to some of the ears it was unconsciously entertaining.

"When two pure hearts are poured in one another,
And love too much, and yet cannot love less:
But almost sanctify the sweet excess
By the immortal wish and power to bless."

“ How pretty ! ” exclaimed a female voice, “ I’m sure I can’t think how you can recollect so much ; you can go on saying poetry from morning till night.” Again the solemn tones were heard.

“ Then let us soar to-day ; no common theme
No eastern vision, no distempered dream
Inspires,— our path, though full of thorns, is plain ;
Smooth be the verse, and easy be the strain.”

“ Well, it’s very odd ! I couldn’t if it was ever so — I learnt two songs a little while ago — but I can’t say a word of them now.”

“ Ah ! songs are not the noblest efforts of the muse ; I have often marvelled that our great bards should ever condescend to trifles so unworthy of a soaring genius : — were they Moore’s ? ”

“ No,” replied the fair songstress : — “ you’ll be angry if I tell you.”

‘ Fear not !

“ ————— you are yoked with a lamb
That carries anger, as the flint bears fire,
Which, much enforced, shows a hasty spark
And straight is cold again.” —

“ They were not Moore’s, you say ? ”

“ No, they were Richard Taylor’s ; he insisted upon my taking them.”

“ I did not mean to inquire the name of the donor, but of the author ? ”

“ I thought *authors* only wrote books ? ”

“ Author, derived from the Latin, *augeo*, signifying to cause, or to create, means one who is the cause of the existence of a thing ; consequently,

when I ask you who is the author of the songs, I mean who wrote them?"

"I don't know; but I dare say it was the gentleman you mention, for they were very pretty; quite as pretty as the verses you have been saying."

The listeners, who had with difficulty restrained their laughter, that they might not put an end to this amusing colloquy, now came to an opening, where they were suddenly in view of the poetical pair, who sounded an instantaneous retreat, after a slight bow of recognition from the gentleman. The lady who had taken a part in the preceding dialogue, was the rosy daughter of a rich, but old-fashioned farmer in the neighbourhood, and was, at present, the rural deity of Mr. Augustus Clayton, who had serious thoughts of making her the arbiter of his future fate, and with this view, had undertaken the interesting and laudable task of instilling into her mind a taste for elegant literature.

Nothing could exceed his astonishment and vexation at the rencontre that had just taken place; and he hurried his blushing partner away as quickly as possible, but not before Miss Moreland had contrived, with secret triumph, to draw his eyes towards her and her *militaire*.

This incident afforded infinite amusement to the gayer part of our friends, while Emily and Talbot, but little moved by it, continued the subject by which they had been occupied before it occurred.

"I have had an opportunity of observing," said Talbot, "that the best qualities of mankind are more strongly developed in isolated situations than in the midst of a multitude; and yet the friendly

intercourse of man with man ought to produce an increase of kindness and love. But it is not so :— more hospitality is shown to the stranger, under the poor cottager's roof, than he would find were he to seek aid or shelter in the midst of abundance. In fact, the farther we retreat from cities, the more we meet of true benevolence and liberality : — civilization tends, in a great degree, to stifle the natural virtues."

" This may arise," replied Emily, " from the circumstance, that where the greatest numbers are collected together, there will be also the greatest accumulation of vice ; which, although I believe it to be less natural to mankind than virtue, yet, unfortunately, where it does gain admittance, it has a much more powerful ascendancy."

" You are very liberal in your opinion of mankind, Miss St. Clare," said Major Dufforth, who, from time to time joined in their conversation ; — " but I am afraid you would find it somewhat difficult to support your hypothesis."

" I think not," continued Emily ; " for instance, were you to seek the solitary inhabitant of the mountain, you would find him free from selfishness, ostentation, vanity, and numerous other bad qualities, that abound in the civilized world : — he will receive you with welcome, share with you the produce of his labour, and bestow on you all the benefits his scanty means will afford."

" Your remarks are just," said Talbot ; " I have myself experienced more real charity from the tenant of a mud hovel, than ever I met with from the owner of any more commodious dwelling ; and have found more genuine kindness on the banks of the

Ganges, too, than I have been able to discover on the banks of the Thames."

"Where nature takes its own free course," said Emily, "I am convinced that good feelings will always be predominant."

"And do you suppose," said Dufforth, "that the virtues with which you are pleased so plentifully to endow your mountaineers, hermits of the desert, and other worthies of the solitary class, do not proceed from a selfish motive? Being excluded from the world, they are very glad of a little social chat with any one who may happen to fall in their way; and this is the grand secret of their *particular politeness* to travellers. Depend upon it, my fair philosopher, there is not an action perpetrated by one of Adam's race, but may be traced to selfishness as its main spring."

"But here we are at the end of our ramble:" — and he was the only one of the party who was gratified that this was the case; for he began to be weary of the part he was playing — and thus ended the promenade.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ON returning to Beechwood, Osselin went immediately to the library, being anxious to learn what had been Lord Bransby's proceedings with regard to the count; as also to satisfy himself on some points relative to the interference of De Tracey: but on opening the door, instead of seeing his lordship quietly seated at his reading-desk, as he had expected, he beheld Lady Caroline Gresham in earnest conversation with his imagined rival. That the dialogue was of a pleasing, as well as secret, nature, might easily be perceived, for her eyes were sparkling with joy, and her whole countenance lighted up with more animation than Osselin had ever before witnessed. His blood mounted to his cheek, and darting on De Tracey a look of hatred and scorn, he said, "Lady Caroline Gresham, this intrusion is entirely accidental; I was not aware you were here, or thus engaged. When Mr. De Tracey is at liberty I will trespass on a few moments of his time."

"It is at your disposal this moment," said De Tracey; then turning to Lady Caroline, he said,

"Caroline, my love, I will see you again to-morrow."

She arose and quitted the room ; while this manner of addressing her, betraying so unequivocally the good intelligence that subsisted between them, acted on Osselin like a spark dropped on gunpowder ; and, unable longer to stifle his fury, he said in a hurried tone :

"Mr. De Tracey, we have a little account to settle relative to some expressions you thought proper to use at our last interview ; I presume your memory requires no aid from mine on that subject."

"I perfectly remember all that passed on that occasion."

"It is well, sir ; as I expect you are prepared to answer for those expressions, and also to defend, or give an explanation of your conduct in following myself and my friend to Scotland, acting in the double and ungentlemanly capacity of a spy and informer. If I am wrong, sir, you will have the goodness to undeceive me ; if right, I require of you the only atonement it befits me to accept."

"I am ready to answer these charges in any way you may propose, Mr. Vassor. You are not mistaken : I did follow you to Scotland ; and but for an important and unlooked-for circumstance that detained me on the road, I had defeated your mad and culpable project. Did you suppose that, after having vainly attempted to dissuade you from your folly, I should leave you to its uninterrupted pursuit ? No ; though I could not convince your reason, I would have taken more forcible means of preventing you from the commission of a crime, if the circumstance I mention had not delayed me till

the act was done : and great was the regret it caused me."

"Enough, sir ; — the unwarrantable length to which you have carried your interference is an insult to which I will not tamely submit ; therefore, I only await your leisure to arrange this difference."

De Tracey smiled. — "Foolish boy ! you know not what you are doing."

"You intend, then, to refuse my demand ?" said Osselin, in a voice half choked by passion.

"First let me ask you if you are actuated by no other motive than an imaginary sense of injured honour ? Is not the ground you have chosen for quarrel, a mere pretext for the gratification of other feelings ?"

"I am a more able politician," said Osselin, with a contemptuous smile, "than to betray my designs, if I had any : but the attempt to pry into my sentiments is worthy of a man who is base enough to act a part in secret he dares not openly avow."

"It is unnecessary and useless," replied De Tracey, who seemed determined that nothing should discompose him, "to avow the motives of our actions to all the world ; for whatever be the source from which they spring, if there happen to be one worse than another, from which it is possible they might arise, it is to that one they will surely be attributed."

"I am not at all desirous of being entertained by your rhetoric," said Osselin impatiently ; "therefore I once more desire to know when and where we shall meet ?"

"I am at your command."

"To-morrow morning, then, at seven, in the lit-

tle wood at the end of the park, I shall be alone."

De Tracey assented ; and quitting the room immediately, he did not appear again the whole of the day.

Osselin remained thoughtful, and rather petulant ; for if hope delayed is the most heart-sickening pain that mortal can experience, surely revenge delayed is the most irritating ; and his inclination would have prompted him to seek the *rencontre* at that very instant, had it been possible, rather than have deferred it even for so short a space of time. Most anxiously did he count the hours until the following morning ; when, long before the appointed time, he arose, and with a firmer hand than might have been expected under such circumstances, he wrote these few lines :

" My Lord,

" As this will reach you only in the event of my death ; in justice to my antagonist, I wish it to be perfectly understood that it was my proposition, not his, to take this method of deciding a difference of opinion that existed between us. Permit me, my lord, to assure you of my warmest gratitude for the many kindnesses I have received at your hands, and to request that you will place me by the side of my beloved uncle.

" O. V."

This note he addressed to Lord Bransby, put it, unsealed, into his pocket, and taking his pistols, although it wanted nearly an hour of the appointed time, he walked hastily down to the wood.

De Tracey manifested no corresponding anxiety

to anticipate the moment of meeting; therefore Osselin had the benefit of improving his health, by taking forty minutes' exercise in the open air, fanned by the salubrious breezes of the morning, the delightful temperament of which, instead of cooling his fiery mood, rendered it still fiercer.

Time, to the impatient expectant, appears to move as tardily as though he had mowed his wings with his scythe; and every moment is extended, in imagination, to an hour's length. Osselin took out his watch; it still wanted ten minutes to seven. Another long interval; he again looked, and was surprised to find that only five minutes had elapsed since the last examination. "It must have stopped;" and he put it to his ear; but no—the unsympathizing timepiece still kept on a regular humdrum—tic tic—in the same *andante* time that was so unconsonant with the feelings of its master.

At length, the desired moment arrived, and with it the expected rival.

Osselin saluted him politely, but with a distant haughtiness; merely observing that, as there was nothing to wait for, he might choose his ground without delay.

"This will answer my purpose," said De Tracey, "for I am not come here to fight with you, Mr. Vassor."

"How!" exclaimed Osselin fiercely; "do you dare to trifle with me? If you have not courage to act like a man, expect to meet with the chastisement due to a coward,—I once more offer you the alternative—if you are come unprepared, here are two pistols—take your choice. Do you hesitate? then I no longer consider you as a gentleman, or

a man of honour ; and, by heavens ! will take such revenge as you merit.

“ Put up your pistols,” said De Tracey, calmly : “ with all your faults, you have a noble spirit—so put up your pistols ; unless, indeed, you would raise them against the life of your father.”

The weapons fell from the trembling hands of the astonished Indian, as he gazed on De Tracey, in speechless wonder, scarcely daring to believe the reality of the words he had heard.

“ Father !” he repeated, his voice rendered almost inarticulate by emotions of surprise, doubt, and joy ; “ have I then a father ? let me but hear the blessed sound again, and I will believe it.”

“ Yes, Osselin, my beloved son ! continued De Tracey ; “ I am your father — that unhappy father who was compelled to desert you even before your birth ; yet whose heart has ever yearned to acknowledge and to bless you.” He opened his arms, Osselin rushed into them, and for the first time in his life was pressed to his father’s bosom.

A thousand times did he entreat pardon for all that had passed, and a thousand times was he assured that all should be forgiven and forgotten.

“ And why then, my father,” said Osselin, “ have you so long concealed yourself from me ? why have you so patiently endured all the insults my rash folly has heaped upon you, and which I shall never cease to reproach myself with ? and yet I ought to be forgiven, since it was from ignorance alone I erred.”

De Tracey again assured him of his full and free forgiveness, adding, “ Your faults, my dear boy, are more than expiated by this lively sense of them.

Continue ever thus ready to see and to acknowledge your errors, and you will be all I can desire my son to be. But I have much to say to you ; and ere we separate, it will be better that I inform you why this mystery has been necessary ; its causes and its end. Come, therefore, with me, and learn the unhappy events that have embittered my life, and separated me from my son.

With a heart overflowing with transports of affection and gratitude, Osselin accompanied his father to a small but elegant residence, which De Tracey had chosen for his abode while he remained in Derbyshire ; and having breakfasted together, the latter entered upon the promised narration.

CHAPTER XXIX.

“THE task I have now to perform, is indeed a painful one, to take a retrospective view of my life, and sketch, as briefly as possible, the events I would bury for ever in oblivion, but for the hope I cherish that the knowledge of them may teach you, my son, to form a true and impartial estimate of your father’s character, unbiassed by the opinion of the world; uninfluenced by the illiberal prejudices of individuals. It would be superfluous now to enumerate the incidents of my earliest years, since they had little or no sway over the fortunes of my after life.—It will suffice to state such occurrences as are most important, and requisite for you to be made acquainted with, now that your judgment is sufficiently matured to take a proper analysis of them.

“I entered the army at an early age, and, while yet only an ensign, saw and loved one of the most beautiful and amiable women that ever graced the circles of fashion. Her parents were noble, but not wealthy; and my rank being equal to her own, my prospects bright, and my hopes ardent, I had

no difficulty in obtaining their consent to my proposals; hers I had already assured myself of, and our union was to take place when I had attained to the rank of colonel, which I flattered myself was no very distant period, as powerful interest ensured my speedy promotion. We were both young, and although we would willingly have shortened the time of our probation, we were obliged to submit, and I departed, in full confidence of the sincerity of her affection, to join my regiment, then stationed in the north of Ireland. Life was then bright, for hope gilded every prospect: alas! how soon did the cloud come over me! During the first ten months of my absence, each succeeding post brought fresh assurances of my Caroline's affection and constancy; but at the end of that time, her letters suddenly ceased. In vain I wrote; post after post arrived from England, but no reply was returned to my numerous and anxious entreaties but for one line to tell me what could be the cause of this silence. In a state of indescribable uneasiness, I wrote to her father, and received in answer, a few cold, formal lines, merely saying, that his daughter was in delicate health, and was gone to the south of France, hoping to improve it by a change of air.

“Almost maddened at this intelligence, and overwhelmed with astonishment that she should have left England without giving me the slightest intimation of her intention, a suspicion crossed my mind that my credulity was imposed on, under which impression I tried to obtain leave of absence, that I might ascertain by whom, and for what reason, the deception was practised, if deception there

were. But the service in which I was then engaged, prevented me from carrying this plan into execution, and my only alternative was to entrust a friend, who was acquainted with the circumstances, to act for me. The intense anxiety I suffered during his absence, threw me on a bed of sickness, and I was still labouring under the effects of a violent fever, when he returned. Although I had looked forward to this moment with restless impatience, when it did actually arrive, I dreaded to hear the result of his inquiries: but he could give me very little information on the subject—for on his arrival in town, he discovered that the whole family had departed, it was said for North Wales, whither he immediately followed; but instead of meeting with them, he found that the intelligence he had received was false, and that, so far from having arrived, they were not even expected at their estate in that country. He returned again to town, but all his efforts to gain intelligence of them were unavailing, and, after many fruitless endeavours, he unwillingly gave up the search. Another month passed on in this dreadful suspense, each day I arose with a hope of hearing some tidings of my love, and each night I sought my pillow with another pang of disappointment to my already overburthened heart; and my health was rapidly yielding to this continual state of excitement. Doubt, however, was at length terminated by absolute despair; for one morning, in turning over the newspaper, judge if you can, my dear son, of the feelings with which I read this paragraph; I remember the words as perfectly as though they were before me. ‘ Married, at Lincoln, the

Right Honourable the Earl of Gresham, to Caroline, only daughter of Sir James Montgomery, Bart. Immediately after the ceremony, the noble earl and his lovely bride set off for Paris, from whence they proceed to make the tour of Switzerland and Italy.' I will pass over the miserable days that succeeded this death-blow to my hopes and affections: it is a melancholy retrospect; would it could be for ever banished from my memory! I was on the very verge of the grave, and fervently did I pray that I might soon find in it a resting place from my sorrows. Youth, however, triumphed over the destroyer of men; and that powerful emollient, time, calmed the violence of my grief. As soon as I returned to England, my first object was to seek an explanation with Sir James Montgomery, and demand satisfaction for the insult I had received, either from himself or the author of the treachery of which I had been the victim. I went to him, my heart burning with resentment; but the apparent kindness with which he met me, induced me to exonerate him in my mind, from any share in the plot. With well-dissembled sorrow he lamented that his influence over the actions of his daughter was insufficient to prevent her from being dazzled by the offer of a coronet: and further assured me, hypocrite as he was, that he had been deceived into a belief that my affections were changed, and that I no longer desired the alliance. He appeared lost in amazement when I declared my innocence of this charge, and my total ignorance of the change in her sentiments until the account of her marriage accidentally reached me; he also disclaimed any

knowledge of the letter bearing his signature, by which I had been falsely informed that she had gone in ill health to France.

“ Fully convinced that she I adored had deserted and deceived me, I endeavoured to forget one whom I believed unworthy of remembrance. Naturally gay, I gradually regained my usual flow of spirits, and, after a lapse of time, became attached to the sister of one of my superior officers, whom I shortly afterwards married. This officer, was then a captain, afterwards general, Cameron, and his sister was your mother. A few weeks after our marriage, the Earl and Countess of Gresham returned from Italy, bringing with them an infant daughter, and I could not suppress the desire I felt to behold once more the woman I had so fondly loved. It was not that I cherished any remains of my former passion, but an indefinable feeling impelled me onward, to seek the gratification of this wish, and an opportunity soon presented itself. I was then at York, and the baptism of the child was about to be celebrated with great magnificence at the earl’s castle in Lincolnshire. Carefully concealing from my wife the motives by which I was actuated, I went to Lincoln, in order to be present at the festival. For the space of three days the castle was open to all visitors; but although I availed myself of this, and was freely admitted, all my attempts to see the countess were ineffectual. She did not once appear, and her delicate state of health was pleaded to the guests as an excuse for this apparent want of courtesy. I had entirely relinquished the hope of seeing her, and was preparing to depart, when, on the evening of the third

day, as I was lingering in one of the most unfrequented walks of the castle park, I perceived a lady approaching towards me, whom my heart instantly recognized; but her eyes were fixed on the ground in a deep reverie, and she did not observe me until it was too late to withdraw. Oh, what a meeting was this! explanation but added to the misery of eternal separation; we had been both deceived—we had been the victims of a deep-laid, and too successful plot, to part us for ever. Our letters had been intercepted, and instead of mine, others had been sent to her in a hand so similar, that she had never entertained the least doubt of their authenticity. By such means was I deprived of the only woman I ever loved; by such means was she induced to believe that I was devoting my attention to another, and to so great an extent was the deception carried, that an account of my marriage had actually been inserted in some of the daily papers, but not in the principal ones, where it would have been likely to meet my eye; although the contrivers of this infamous plot took care that it should not escape hers. Not once doubting its truth, and careless of her future fate, Caroline consented to gratify the ambitious views of her parents, by giving her hand to the wealthy earl, on whose account, though without his knowledge, this cruel stratagem had been planned and executed.

“I will not dwell longer upon this interview, the remembrance of which is, even now, inexpressibly painful; but, ere we separated for ever, she obtained from me a solemn promise, which it is, at this moment, one of the principal objects of my life to fulfil. The earl had already con-

tracted his daughter, not yet three months old, to the son of an esteemed friend; and her unhappy mother, whose faded cheek was a visible proof of the misery of an alliance without affection, feeling that she should have quitted the world long ere her daughter would arrive at an age to know how serious is the nature of such an engagement, made it her last request that, if I survived the earl, I would watch over the future happiness of her child. I solemnly swore to make this my first imperative duty. — We parted — and we never met again. Wretched as this interview had made me, I cannot reproach myself with one act of negligence or unkindness to my wife: on the contrary, it was my study, by every attention in my power, to prevent her from discovering that my affection was not exclusively her own; alas! I was fully conscious of this myself, but I believe that no one could have detected the estrangement of my heart. Fortunately for me, considering the state of mind in which I then was, our regiment was ordered out to India, and, on arriving at Madras, I found that the battalion under my command was for a distant station. My wife being then near her confinement, I left her under the protection of her brother, and proceeded up the country. I shall make this part of my history as brief as possible; the first intelligence that reached me was, that I had become a father — the next, that my wife had deserted her infant son, and fled with one, who, for many years had possessed my unlimited confidence and friendship. This unexampled villain owed peculiar obligations to me; twice had he been on the very verge of ruin, and twice had I supplied him with money to support

his failing credit. By my interest two of his brothers had obtained lucrative appointments; I had, in many other instances, rendered him essential service; and he was, through my aid, at that moment in affluence. But the weapons I gave him for self-defence, were turned against my own bosom; the wealth I had helped him to acquire, was used to poison my cup of life, already sufficiently bitter; he had repaid the benefits I had unsparingly heaped upon him, by depriving me of the only blessing that had remained to me. Thus disgraced in the eyes of the world, all my prospects so effectually blighted by this unexpected blow, and unable to stay where I fancied every eye was turned on me with pity or derision, either equally hard to bear; I thought only of revenging the injury, threw up my commission, and without seeing my child, embarked for America, whither I had been informed the fugitives had gone. At Boston I learnt they had set sail for Ireland, and I still continued the pursuit, but without success. At length I lost all traces of them; and, wearied of my own existence, and disgusted with a world in which I had, though still young, met with so much of disappointment, ingratitude, and treachery, I settled in one of the West India islands, assumed another name, and became the proprietor of extensive plantations, where I amassed a considerable share of wealth, and there perhaps I had ended my days; but the sacred promise I had made to the angel who had long since finished her mortal career, brought me back to my native land. My first care, on arriving in England, was to inform myself of the situation of her orphan daughter, and I soon discovered that the fears her

mother had entertained for her happiness were but too well founded. But I need not recapitulate those circumstances with which you are already acquainted. I was fully resolved to fulfil my promise, at any cost, and knowing well that you were amply provided for by your uncle, I determined to devote a great part of my possessions to release Lady Caroline Gresham from her unfortunate engagement. This was the cause of my keeping my existence a secret, fearing my son might perhaps consider such a disposition of my property an injustice to himself; therefore, until my vow was accomplished, I thought it better to remain unknown.

“ My misguided wife had died in France, poor and despised; having for many years been deserted by the wretch who had drawn her from the paths of virtue and of duty. The certainty that she no longer existed removed a weight from my mind, and the pleasing intelligence that General Cameron and his nephew were expected in England, gave birth to emotions of joy to which I had long been a stranger.

“ A delightful ray of hope now took possession of my soul; I succeeded in gaining the esteem and confidence of the amiable girl, who is all that her angelic parent once was; and should you, my son, prove worthy of her, I may perhaps enjoy the felicity of seeing that happiness bestowed on our children which was denied to us; thus will you, my dear Osselin, not be deprived of your patrimony; and I shall at once redeem my pledge, and ensure to myself as much of peace as can be the lot of a

heart withered by the disappointment of all its earliest ties and affections."

Thus ended the narrative of De Tracey, to which his son had listened with intense interest; but he had suppressed one circumstance, which, for the satisfaction of our readers, we will ourselves record.

It has already been stated that De Tracey was interrupted in his pursuit of the Count de Léal, by an unexpected occurrence; and it is this we are now about to relate.

It was a dark, stormy evening; and the traveller, who supposed himself within five miles of the fugitives, was crossing a dreary moor, in the northern extremity of Northumberland. The clouds were gathering thick and fast around him, and his ear began to distinguish the sound of distant thunder. All these hostile appearances in the upper regions held out no pleasing prospect to a solitary equestrian, in an uninhabited waste, two miles at least from the nearest place of shelter. Willing, however, to escape from the coming storm as soon as possible, he urged his horse to still greater speed, when a man suddenly crossed his path, whose appearance, as far as De Tracey could judge by the imperfect light, was not calculated to give the most favourable impression of his character or intentions; but he had not time to make much observation, for the stranger threw himself in the way of the horse, and seizing the reins with a strong hand, arrested his course. De Tracey never travelled unarmed; but before he had time to snatch a pistol from his belt, the robber levelled one at his head. "If you offer the least resistance, I shoot you instantly," he

said, in the deep and hardened tone of a determined villain.

At the sound of his voice, his intended victim, with supernatural strength, dashed the weapon from his hand, which discharged itself as it touched the ground, and the robber fell.

“Wretch!” cried De Tracey, in a voice of thunder, “your crimes are punished, and I am revenged.”

“Hah! I should know that voice,” exclaimed the fallen man—“Who art thou?” say—speak quickly—for I am dying.”

“It is Vassor,” replied his antagonist, furiously.—“Vassor, whose peace you have destroyed for ever! Vassor, who has sought you through the world, to take vengeance for his wrongs; and who now offers his thanks to the just God, who has made him the instrument of retribution”—

The robber groaned, but spoke not, and in a few moments lay perfectly motionless. A louder clap of thunder now announced that the storm was approaching, and a few heavy drops of rain warned the traveller to provide for his own safety.

“Yet I cannot leave this wretch to perish thus miserably; if assistance can be procured he shall have it;” and with this intention he galloped off towards the village. The encreasing storm greatly impeded his progress; but he put spurs to his horse, and unmindful of the lightning that flashed around him, or of the torrents that were pouring from above, he at length reached the inn, and gave a hurried account of what had happened, desiring that proper persons might be immediately sent to bring the wounded man to the house. But

it was not an easy matter to get this command obeyed. None were willing to encounter such a storm for the purpose of rendering assistance to a ruffian who had for some time been the terror of the country for miles round. At last, by promises of an ample reward, two men were induced to undertake the adventure; and as soon as De Tracey had seen them mounted and on their way, he began to think of changing his own drenched apparel, while the people of the inn undertook to procure medical aid; and the surgeon of the village was in attendance ere the patient arrived. At length the apparently lifeless body was brought in and laid on a bed; but before the surgeon proceeded to examine the wound, he endeavoured to restore the suspended animation.

De Tracey gave one glance at the countenance, which presented a most ghastly and livid appearance, rendered still more appalling by the spots of blood with which it was disfigured. That one glance was sufficient; he turned away with horror from features that recalled, with dreadful force, to his mind circumstances that only seemed to slumber in memory, in order to awaken with additional strength, when the transitory oblivion was disturbed. Time had left the traces of his progress upon the still inanimate countenance since De Tracey had last beheld it; but there were still the marked brows, the curled lip, the prominent features, that could not be mistaken. The dying man now unclosed his eyes, and the first object they rested upon was he whom he had so deeply injured. Closing them again with a convulsive shudder, he murmured faintly — “ It is just — yes — it must be a provi-

dence that directed this." The surgeon now attempted to examine the wound, but he resisted with what little of strength remained to him. "What would you save me for?" he said bitterly—"to perish on the scaffold! Let me die—he has taken my life, who has the greatest right to it—but oh! let me not see him again—it tortures—it maddens me!" De Tracey moved away—"I have done enough for revenge," said he; "it is not for me to add to the dying agonies of a sinner."

The guilty wretch was asked if he wished to receive spiritual consolation, but he rejected the proffer with frantic violence. "Mock me not!" he exclaimed—"What can a priest do now for me? I have no hope for the future.—My God! my God!—how I have scoffed at the idea of a future! I thought existence terminated here—oh! that I could think so now!"

His ravings continued; but his voice grew fainter and fainter, till death ended the harrowing scene.

For several days De Tracey was so ill, from the united effects of the storm, and the shock his nerves had received, that he was unable to pursue his route; and by the time he was sufficiently recovered, it was no longer necessary to do so, as the marriage had taken place, which it was the sole object of his journey to prevent.

CHAPTER XXX.

“ **MAY** I be admitted ?” said Louise, peeping in at the door of the music-room, where Lady Hamilton and Miss Moreland were sitting at work, while Emily practised a new song.

“ **Thank heaven !** ” she continued, coming into the room at the same time, “ I have at last found a corner to bestow myself in, without interrupting a tête-à-tête : but perhaps you were holding a cabinet council here ? if so, my only resource is to walk up and down the stairs till all the meetings are dissolved ; for every room in the house is turned into a secret committee chamber.”

“ **How so, my dear ?** ” said Lady Hamilton.

“ **Really, aunt, I cannot make you acquainted with the why, and the wherefore ; but I'll just state the facts as they have come under my observation ; and leave you to judge if we are not on the very eve of a grand revolution.** I open one door, and discover Mr. Vassor on his knees to Lady Caroline Gresham ; — exit Louise, of course. Now, doubtless, the posture which Mr. Vassor had assumed is the fashionable way of entertaining ladies in India ;

but here, it makes a third person feel rather ‘ *un de trop*. ’ After this mal-apropos entrée, and consequent rapid retreat, I take my way to another apartment, where, again an intruder, I find Lionel, looking like a criminal at the bar, while papa only lacks a full-bottomed wig and a flowing robe, to be the exact prototype of Judge Best ; I stood a moment, not knowing whether to advance or retreat, though by this time pretty well accustomed to the latter mode of proceeding, when the question was quickly decided by papa, who very politely desired me to withdraw. Thus driven back at all points, I took refuge here, not without certain misgivings, that I should pop upon Miss Moreland and the major ; or disturb a little interesting conversazione, got up between Miss Emily St. Clare and —, but here I stop.”

“ I really think it is time you did,” said Emily, blushing deeply ; “ I cannot imagine how you can talk so much nonsense.”

“ I assure you,” continued Louise, “ I begin to feel myself ill-treated : why am I not to have my private audiences like the rest of the world ? Besides, it was particularly provoking to find every body so occupied with their own affairs, that they had no leisure to attend to the intelligence I had just heard, and, of course, was dying to communicate.”

“ But we are at leisure to listen,” said Miss Moreland, eagerly ; “ pray, Miss Bransby, let us hear the news.”

“ Guess what it is.”

“ That it is impossible ;” said Emily, “ for your

intelligence is generally of so extraordinary a nature, that it defies all power of divination."

"True, my dear — the very thing that renders it so valuable and interesting. The present tale I have to unfold, is a marriage shortly to be celebrated within five miles of Beechwood."

"A marriage!" echoed Miss Moreland. "Oh, dear me! I hope it is not —"

"No, Miss Moreland, I assure you it is not," replied Louise, laughing. "If it had been, I hope I should have possessed more discretion than to have mentioned it so abruptly."

"Bless me! Miss Louise; how could you possibly guess who I meant?"

"It was certainly very difficult, but I am uncommonly clever at guessing: however, to keep you no longer in suspense, for I perceive Emily begins to look anxious — the Duke of Belltown is coming down next week, for the express purpose of entering into the holy estate of matrimony."

"And does he bring a bride with him, or is he coming in the expectation of finding one at Beechwood?" said Emily.

"I assure you, dear, we poor humble inmates of Beechwood may consider ourselves too happy if we are honoured with an invitation to the breakfast. The doings on this great occasion are to outdo all that has ever yet been done or undone — and the duchess elect is Miss Parnell. Wherever I turn, I hear of nothing but brides that are, or brides that are to be. I find also, that the runaway count means to bring his bride to Beechwood to-morrow; which intention I suspect you were well aware of, my Lady Hamilton?"

“ Yes, my dear ; but as I am not always dying to communicate all I know, you would probably have remained in ignorance some hours longer, had you not arrived at the knowledge by some other means.”

Louise was about to reply, when every thought was put to flight by the unexpected appearance, in propriâ personâ, of Sir Charles Freemantle, who had voluntarily emerged from his hitherto favourite retreat, to do that of which he had so often expressed his dislike, namely — pay a morning visit.

To what cause might be attributed this alteration in the sentiments and pursuits of the misanthropical baronet ? Perhaps he was influenced by the laudable desire of enlarging his mind by the acquisition of new ideas to be obtained by the perambulation of fresh scenes, of which the extensive domain of Beechwood afforded a great variety ; or probably he wished to improve his philosophy, by employing his leisure moments in the study of mankind, which object could not be promoted at Myrtlewood, there being no mankind to study, except Major Dufforth, whom he knew by heart, and old Robert the gardener, whose heart was centre'd in his cabbages. From whatever cause it might proceed, certain it is that his *penchant* for absolute retirement had lost much of its force since his last sojourn in Dover-street ; and Louise, how little soever she might be entitled to it, did not fail to take a considerable portion of credit to herself for this agreeable change. In high spirits at so flattering a proof of her power, she was this morning more charming, lively, and entertaining than ever. Pleased in spite of himself, Sir Charles did not

seem inclined to terminate his visit very speedily ; for after having exhausted every topic of conversation he could think of, he bethought him that he much wished to hear Emily sing, and preferred his request in terms so courteous, that a refusal was impossible.

“ Do you not remember, Louise,” said Emily, seating herself at the piano forte, “ you promised to write me the words of that song I lost ? ”

“ I will do it now,” replied Louise, opening her writing desk.

“ Allow me to place it in a more commodious light,” said Sir Charles, moving the desk, when a small seal of very remarkable form, attracted his attention, and he took it up to examine the device.

The consequence of her carelessness instantly flashed across the mind of Louise, but it was too late to prevent it : by a momentary impulse she raised her eyes to his face, but cast them down again in unspeakable confusion ; for his were fixed on her with an expression so penetrating, so impossible to be misunderstood, while his hand still retained her little silent betrayer, that she saw, in that one glance, her secret was a secret no longer.

How much more rapidly may thought be conveyed by the eyes than the tongue, and how infinitely more accurate and expressive is their language -- since the feelings, as well as ideas, may be better communicated, and better understood, by a single glance, than by any effort of speech, were a whole day employed in the endeavour.

This does not, however, apply to all cases ; there being many instances in which the language of the eyes could not be employed with good effect. For

example — no reverend divine could expect to benefit his congregation in the same degree by a significant look, as by a forty minutes' discourse.

The prima donna would scarcely be able to convey "*Assisa al pie d'un salice*" to her audience by a glance, however charming the expression of her eyes. The learned counsellor would not greatly benefit his client, by endeavouring to convince the judge by "nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles."

But in the present instance, had hours been spent in explanation, not more could have been said, than was told in that one transient glance.

In the mean time Emily had proceeded with her lay, which was the following simple ballad, written by Talbot, which might be the reason she made choice of it.

" Oh turn thee, palmer — turn thee in
And rest," the maiden cried,

" 'Tis a weary way thou hast to win,
And the night-star does not guide!"

" Nay, lady," said the palmer — " Nay,
I have a vow, and must away."

" Deem not thy vow so sacred then,
Nor fate and fear defy ;
Nor fly thee from the haunts of men
In desert wastes to die."

" Nay, lady, nay — I may not rest,
A troubulous crime is on my breast."

" I pray thee, palmer, tell to me
What sin is on thy soul ?
Shak'st thou at what I crave of thee !

Why does thy dark eye roll ?"

" Oh ! lady, since thou dost command —
A brother's blood is on my hand!"

“ Dearly we loved — yet one dark day —
Some angry word he spoke ;
The evil one assumed the sway,
I smote the fell death-stroke.
Ah, Lady ! would my life’s last breath
Could bring that brother back from death !”

“ On, palmer, on ! and seek, by prayer,
Thy sins may be forgiven ;
Let penitence and faith, while here,
Plead for thy soul in heaven !”
“ Lady, farewell ! St. Hilda’s shrine,
And prayer, and fast, and scourge, be mine.”

Emily concluded her rather mournful song; thinking in the simplicity of her heart, that the gentleman at whose request she was exerting her musical powers, was listening to her, but she could not possibly have been in greater error—which, on turning her head, she began to suspect; for instead of the smiles of approbation she naturally looked for, and that all young ladies have an undoubted right to expect on such occasions, she was much surprised to find that Lady Hamilton and Miss Moreland had both vanished, and that no two persons could, apparently, be paying less attention to a vocal performance than were Sir Charles Freemantle and Louise; unless it was to the whispered one with which they were entertaining each other.

“ I will not trouble you to write that song, dear ;” said Emily—“ for I have just recollect ed where it is ;” and she left the room in order to find it ; thinking, probably, as Louise had done in the morning, that a third person is sometimes—“ un de trop.”

“ Can it be possible that I am so happy ?” said Sir Charles, as soon as they were alone ; “ only let me hear you confirm it with your lips, Miss

Bransby, for I fear to trust any evidence but your own admission."

" Since you have found it out," answered Louise, half laughing, " I most unwillingly confess that I have been foolish enough to scribble over two or three sheets of paper that had, perhaps, better have remained —

' Pure, and unwritten still' —

and all I can now say is, I sincerely hope you will benefit by the excellent advice I have given you."

" I should be indeed ungrateful to receive it unprofitably; but suffer me to hope that I am not to lose the inestimable advantage of so charming a monitress."

" The charms, I fear, are all fled with the mystery," she replied: " admonitions coming from a direct and undisguised source do not possess half the influence of a few salutary lessons from an invisible oracle."

" At least, do not refuse to try me," said the baronet, when the entrance of Lionel put a stop to a conversation which was, each moment, growing more interesting.

In the mean time the events of the library had not been of a less remarkable character than those of the music-room: for De Tracey, soon after he had parted from Osselin in the morning, had sought an interview with Lord Bransby, to whom he briefly related all the circumstances with which we have made our readers acquainted; consequently, when Lionel appeared before his father, having with difficulty summoned courage to make a full disclosure of his resolves, both as regarded the present and the future, he was astonished to find him

already in possession of the principal facts; and learnt, in his turn, with joyful wonder, the newly discovered affinity between Osselin and De Tracey, and the liberal intentions of the latter in favour of Lady Caroline Gresham. Thus effectually released from his chief anxiety, the happy Lionel found himself in full possession of the liberty he had so long and so ardently sighed for; and feeling that he was no longer called upon to pay the price he had anticipated for freedom, he did not hesitate to solicit the consent of his ever indulgent father, to the completion of those wishes that could alone ensure the happiness of his future existence. This declaration was not entirely unexpected; and although it was received in silence, Lionel thought he perceived a certain expression in the countenance of his father which caused him not to regret having made it: and in this conclusion he was correct; for Lord Bransby, whose later years had been greatly embittered by the stings of self-reproach, had felt too acutely the bitterness of regret for having marred the happiness of his son, to oppose, now that he possessed the power of promoting it.

“ My beloved Lionel,” he said, embracing him affectionately, “ if you are happy, it is all that your father can desire; you are at liberty, my child, to make your own selection, and I am persuaded it will be one which you will never have reason to regret, nor I to blush for.”

Lionel had ever entertained the highest respect and filial tenderness for his father; and his eyes filled with tears of affection and gratitude at this further and marked proof of his kindness; while he spoke eloquently in praise of her who, he did not

fear to say, would do honour to the illustrious name she was soon to bear.

Burning with impatience, he flew to the cottage, where Adelaide was still a prey to all the tortures of suspense, uncheered by any very brilliant gleamings of hope. The presence of her noble lover, however, quickly dispersed the clouds that had begun to gather around her; and in the sweet delirium of present joy, and the prospect of future felicity, she neither felt nor anticipated a care that might darken with doubt this blissful vision.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WE will now return to Lady Arlington, whom we left in the full enjoyment of all the beauties of a Scottish landscape, which possessed so many attractions, that it was nearly the dinner-hour when she and Marian returned to the inn.

Although, in her general habits, she was a woman of the strictest economy, she was by no means pleased to find that there would be one less at table than she had expected, and an investigation into the cause of the deficiency immediately took place. The explanation of the waiter, who had so innocently assisted the plot, was a sufficient elucidation of it; all that could now be done on the part of the ladies, was to vent their dissatisfaction in tears, invectives, and unavailing wishes that they had kept a better watch over the liberated captive.

What plan was to be pursued? To attempt to overtake the fugitives was in vain; for not only were they ignorant which road was likely to lead to such a conclusion; but the delinquents had the advantage of two hours' start, and most probably a quicker conveyance; therefore the chace afforde

but little prospect of success. It was equally useless and unpleasant to prosecute their projected journey, even as far as Edinburgh, since it would be a continual subject for reprehension to the wary Scotch cousins, that Lady Arlington should have been unwise enough to trust the silly young lassie out of her sight for an instant. Dreading a thousand commentaries on this theme, the two ladies, after a long discussion, decided that it would be preferable, under the present circumstances, to return direct to London, and there await some intelligence of Lavinia, whose sins her ladyship threatened to visit, by withdrawing for ever her countenance and assistance. This charitable and affectionate determination was seconded by Marian, who gave it as her opinion that all such forward and disobedient little minxes deserved to be treated with the utmost rigour; and in this truly christian spirit they arrived in Brook-street, the day before the count and countess reached town.

Unwilling that the elopement should be made public, as also to show themselves in town at this unfashionable season of the year, they quietly shut themselves up, in expectation of some communication, and of the arrival of Captain Arlington, to whom they had written an account of the distressing event, which to him was anything but distressing. For several days they remained thus invisible, till the appearance of the captain put affairs in rather a different training.

“ So! Captain Robert Arlington, I hope you are perfectly satisfied with the delightful effects of your most judgmatrical conduct!” was Marian’s greeting to her brother, on his return.

“ Meaning it to be understood that you are not, I suppose, sister Marian. But whether my conduct has had anything to do with it or not, I consider it a right glorious achievement.—Egad! I did not think my little darling had so much spirit.”

“ You ought to be ashamed of yourself! I always said you would be the ruin of that child, and bring disgrace upon the whole family.”

“ Oh! you flatter me,” said the captain, bowing profoundly; “ I beg most gratefully to acknowledge your unprecedented politeness, and to bear you out in the truth of your assertion, that you *did say so.*”

The young lady was provoked to the highest degree; and had it not been for her sex’s dignity, she certainly would not have confined herself to the mere warfare of the tongue, which, however, was no gentle weapon.

Lady Arlington, while the amiable Marian was recovering breath and energy, found an opportunity of putting in a somewhat lengthy dissertation on the various troubles and anxieties that fall to the lot of those who are unfortunate enough to be *blessed with a numerous family*; not forgetting to illustrate her subject, by enlarging upon every instance of folly and extravagance committed by her first-born Robert, on which point her memory was remarkably retentive; and from this she naturally reverted to the narrowness of her own income; coupling thus the two subjects together, that he might, at his leisure, draw his own inferences therefrom.

To this, as a sort of addenda, came the heinous offence of Lavinia, by whose act and deed the

whole race of Arlingtons were cut off for ever from all interest in the great Glenfell estate, the laird of which had always been singled out as a proper husband for her; a marriage that Lady Arlington had calculated upon, as securing to herself and Marian a place of sojourn, for at least six months in the year, a plan that would have lessened materially the expenses of housekeeping in Brook-street, and thus have been an actual increase of income. Lady Arlington finished an animated harangue, the latter part of which was the best, in the opinion of her son, for this reason, because it was the last of it, by repeating her fixed determination never to see her young and lovely daughter more.

Captain Arlington listened with as much patience as he could command to the prudential oration, and replied to it by representing that his sister had not disgraced herself or her family, by marrying a man every way her equal, and presumptive heir to the title of marquis.

“ Your theory is as ridiculous as your practice,” said Marian, “ and both are worthy of the person from whom they emanate. What is the use of a title to a beggar? The poverty of the marquis is notorious: every body knows that all his hopes rested upon his son’s marrying a fortune.”

“ In that case,” said the captain, “ he is the person who has the most reason to complain; for, according to your own theory, he is the greatest sufferer.”

But it was in vain he argued; the ladies were inflexible in their resolution of discarding the happy pair; and all they desired to know was, in what place they had taken up their abode, that they

themselves might act accordingly, with reference to their northern relatives, particularly the two aunts at Islington, whom they dreaded exceedingly to offend. With this view, therefore, they wished the captain to commence a search, which he readily undertook to do, suppressing the trifling fact that he had a letter at that moment in his pocket from Lavinia, containing all the information requisite to enable him to find them without the slightest difficulty, which he forthwith proceeded to do. Most cordially was he welcomed by the count; and Lavinia received with delight the consolations and caresses of her beloved brother, by whose advice she sat down to frame an apologetic letter to her mamma. The count had only that morning received Lord Bransby's letter, in which he was invited to make Beechwood his present residence, an invitation he was anxious to accept; and intimated to Captain Arlington that it was his desire to leave town on the following day; but the proud young officer, though too delicate to make the objection openly, could not brook the idea of his sister going to the Bransbys a portionless bride, and in some measure dependent upon their generosity; and he suggested to the count that it might be better to leave Lavinia in town, under his protection, until some arrangement was made by the Marquis and Lady Arlington for their future support; which, notwithstanding her ladyship's present angry mood, might easily be effected by the interference of Lord Bransby. On hearing, however, of the very affectionate reception they had met with from aunt Jeanie and her sister, a new idea crossed his mind,

and he took his way to Islington, promising to return to dinner.

The two old ladies were comfortably seated in the drawing-room, holding a consultation on the very subject of their nephew's mission, when he was announced.

There is a sort of instinctive kindly feeling in the female heart, if it be not a very obdurate one indeed, towards a very handsome, insinuating young man; and the reception our "militaire," now met with, proved that the spinsters in question still indulged that natural and amiable prepossession in favour of the youthful and elegant of the opposite sex. Finding how the pulses beat with regard to Lady Arlington, and that the opposition party was most likely to find favour in their sight, the captain, to try his generalship in case of future promotion, commenced the attack on the weakest side, by declaring that his mother was so incensed against the young couple, that she had refused to afford them the least assistance, thus exposing them to the miseries of poverty and dependance at the beginning of their career, unless the marquis could be induced to make a provision for them, which was not probable, unless any advance on his part were met with equal liberality, on the part of Lady Arlington. He was particularly eloquent on the want of feeling by which the conduct of his mother and elder sister was characterized, and this produced the desired effect. The good sisters immediately resolved to take the field armed with kindness and compassion, in opposition to cruelty and oppression; and perceiving by the gradual softening of the features what was passing in their hearts,

the skilful manœuvrer attacked them on another vulnerable point, namely, family pride, of which the Misses Douglass possessed rather above a moderate share, by hinting the disgrace it would be to so ancient, and hitherto highly respected a family, that one of its distinguished members should be known to be supported by the bounty of those who could claim no kindred with it.

All the feelings of etiquette, prejudice, and pride, nourished in the bosoms of the northern dames for nearly seventy years, took alarm at the impending degradation, and they adopted the final resolution of settling a handsome stipend upon Lavinia, if the marquis would consent to make a liberal addition to the annual remittances he had been accustomed to send for the maintenance of his son; by which means they might be enabled to support, if not a splendid, at least a comfortable establishment.

This was a great point gained; for although the actual expenditure of the ancient dames did not amount to one third of their income, it was a grand effort to part with so considerable a sum; yet they consoled themselves by reflecting that, as they really intended to bestow a large portion of their wealth on Lavinia, and as they made no use of it themselves, they might as well prevent her from wishing for their exit from the world, by allowing her to enjoy her destined fortune while they still remained in life; besides which, they would have the gratification of knowing that they were at once supporting the dignity of the family, and frustrating the intentions of Lady Arlington and her daughter, whom they cordially hated.

The captain expressed, and really felt, the most lively gratitude for a kindness and liberality far exceeding his most sanguine expectations, and at his earnest desire the old ladies accompanied him to Judd-street, where the warm-hearted, unaffected gratitude of their youthful relatives completely reconciled them to the tremendous sacrifice they were about to make.

On his return home, Captain Arlington merely said that he had seen Lavinia, who was on the eve of accompanying her husband to Beechwood, and that he himself intended to be of the party, having promised Mr. Vassor to pay a visit to that part of the country. For any further information he referred his mother to the letter Lavinia had entrusted to him, which she indignantly tossed from her, without condescending to break the seal. He did not judge it advisable to mention the promises made by the Miss Douglasses, until the settlement was made; and, leaving both mother and sister in “civil dudgeon”—he retired for the night.

Early on the following morning, with brightened prospects as well as countenances, the travellers commenced their journey, and were soon happily domesticated beneath the friendly roof of Beechwood Hall.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN the olden time, when the refectories of the convent were crowded with knights, pilgrims, and travellers of all sorts, coming and going, passing and repassing, the holy fathers no doubt thought their hospitality abundantly repaid by the stories of adventure and vicissitude which they heard from their guests. Many of them may have been comfortable and obese persons, who grew serious and solemn as the narrative lengthened, and whose eyes closed before the catastrophe opened ; while others, if not more spiritual, at least less corporeal, laughed heartily at the good things, frowned at the bad, put in their word at the right or wrong place — and forgot all they had heard before the morrow. But, in addition to these two classes of the audience, there was a third — who mused after they had listened, who asked questions, whose thoughts, as they paced the evening cloisters, recurred involuntarily to the story, and whose slumbers were haunted by its phantom horrors. Such men were *authors* by instinct ; they “wreak’d their thought upon expression” without malice prepense ; they kept a

journal, they knew not how and cared not wherefore.

By degrees their fancies were peculiarly touched by the fortunes of some especial personage—some knight, or king, or king's son. They hungered and thirsted after the arrival of fresh travellers, that they might inquire what he had been doing since in the world: and thus the history of his life was transferred to their journal by daily entries. They arrived in due course of time at his marriage, and (monks being generally long-lived and heroes the reverse) closed at length the account with his death—leaving to posterity the task of summing up. These authors were the fathers of modern history, and their productions—termed *Chronicles*—perhaps still more than the fictions of degenerate Greece, were the germ of European romance.

It occurs to us, that *we* are precisely in the situation of those historical monks of the olden time. We write of what we hear—and sometimes of whom we see. Certain individuals in the crowd perpetually circling round us, have more peculiarly attracted our attention; we fix our eyes curiously on their doings in the world; and, although it is just possible—but we hope for the best—that it may not be in our power to record their deaths, yet, in all probability, we shall live long enough to journalise their weddings. In a word, if the reader expects to meet in our pages any one whom he may not meet to-morrow evening at Lady A.'s or Mrs. B.'s, he will be disappointed.

There is just one thing, however, in which our situation bears no resemblance to that of the early chroniclers; and that is, as touching the matter of

summing up. Posterity will take no such trouble for *us*; and we ought, therefore, to make our picture as complete as our poor ability will permit without such assistance. There is, for instance, a certain BARONET, whom the reader only knows, in our history, as an idle man about town, who hides his odd and derogatory notions of the supreme sex in holes and corners, and who gazes in the face of a young woman with a shake of the head, as he thinks how pleasant, yet how impossible it would be to obtain the desire of Pygmalion, and inform the beautiful statue with a soul. Now, we would not have this baronet of ours mistaken for any of the thousand-and-one stalking gentlemen whom we meet with at the houses above particularised—who enliven their common-places with sneers transmitted, with their own foolish faces, from all antiquity, and who at last retire yawningly to dose away the rest of their innocuous night in a club or a coffee-room.

Sir Charles Freemantle was not a mere man of society, and his cue was something more than to assist in forming a picture, and gliding in procession round the room and the park. Emancipated from control at a very early period, by the death of his parents and the carelessness of his guardian, his *first life* was ended before men in general begin to live. The loves and follies of a boy have not frequently a very lasting effect; but with him the case was different. He carried abroad with him into the world the impressions he had received at an age when the judgment is yet in embryo, but when the feelings are like cradled Hercules. The expansion of his mind, instead of removing, only served to

disseminate, though in fainter colours, through his whole character, the marks of the original scar; and his want of faith in woman, when at length unattended by the bitter and burning sense of misery, became at least that sort of cold, thin, milk-and-water, shoulder-shrugging, fashionable infidelity which the lords of the creation,—heaven help them!—call their philosophy.

If he had been placed in a different sphere of life, perhaps the original strength and durability of the materials of his character might have yielded to the influence of circumstances. In the upper walks of society, however,—notwithstanding all that is argued by Mrs. Richardson, the acute and elegant historian of the “Ball-Room” in Friendship’s Offering — there is either a tameness of feeling, or an affectation of it, which renders it almost impossible to penetrate beyond the surface of the female mind. Sir Charles, therefore, was accustomed to gaze on the lovely faces around him as if he had been in a gallery of pictures, and to go home when the exhibition was over, exclaiming “Vanity!—all is vanity!”

How he had been first led to regard with more than usual interest, the gay and high-spirited Louise, is a question, we fear, too deep for us. It has been said, we are aware, that the attention began on the lady’s part; and that the girlish and often repeated freak of playing the mysterious Mentor was the cause of all. This is not unintelligible. The very consciousness of having written the letters must have created, if not an embarrassment, at least a peculiarity in the young lady’s manner towards him; and the baronet, without

being able to trace this peculiarity to any one look or turn, may yet, surrounded as he was by the uniformity of artificial life, have been sensible of its existence. His meditations may then have received an unconscious direction: his solitary room may have opened to a phantom-guest more troublesome than the portraits on the walls; and he may, at some moments of more peculiar nervousness, have inquired with a start, whether it was not possible that he might have been deceived in his theory of woman.

The letters themselves served as food for similar meditations, and at the same time, who knows that he did not connect unconsciously the two ideas, and that Louise was not identified, without his knowing a little of the matter, with his unknown Egeria—of the post! Be this as it may, his heart was thrown into a flutter by the discovery of their actual identity—yea, his heart of hearts into a flutter that—pshaw! what a word! his very soul trembled, as did also the frame which inclosed it. It seemed as if the devils (those unclean spirits which war against the angel woman!) made use of the last moment of their dominion to rend their victim before leaving him for ever.

But there is some difference between leaving and notice to quit. Sir Charles as yet only wished to find himself in the wrong; but all the—*manliness* (favourite word with the masculines!) of his character was in arms against the weakness.

“ Louise,” thought he, “ is agreeable though talkative, and good-humoured though somewhat satirical; she hath a fair face, and a pleasant voice; and she looks like one who hath a hoard

of sweet, pure, natural feelings, beneath the incrustation of brilliant paste with which society decorates the hearts of its slaves. She resembles the *thought* which was once even as the sun in the system of my existence ; and, when I shut my eyes upon the things and persons that surround her like an atmosphere, I can almost fancy her to be a personification of Woman, that glorious dream which, in days for ever gone by, seemed like a portion of my being. But, is a woman of the world less a woman than she of the cot or the desert ? may not the mind retain its qualities in every difference of climate, just as the water remains sweet and pure below when its surface has turned into ice ? I cannot tell. There is no harm, however, in my indulging even in so idle an imagination. But let me not go farther — woe to my philosophy, bought so dearly, and established so long, if I come to mistake the shadow for a reality. In my youth I would needs undeify the Egeria of my dreams — and I know the result !”

But it was not only with such speculations that the baronet amused himself. Louise had become, he knew not how or why, the enemy of his *peace* (we think that is the word in romance) ; and as he dared not fight, and would not fly, he resolved to establish himself as a corps of observation. If the mercurial temperament of the lady is taken into account, it will be easy to conceive the harassing nature of this duty. To see her alone he found to be absolutely impossible, even if so daring a feat had been advisable ; and if perchance he at length congratulated himself on taking up a position in a corner of the room where they were re-

mote from interruption, a grave request to ring for some ridiculous something obliged him to break up his lines and renounce all the advantages of the ground. Sometimes, for more than an hour, he watched for a glance of her eyes — for men are adepts in *visionary* judgment — and, when at length indulged, so dull, fixed, and icy a gaze met his, as set every particle of his blood in motion, and kindled blushes of anger in his cheeks. In vain, however, his self-esteem attempted to tax her with affectation. Louise never did any thing that did not seem natural and necessary to be done ; and her very jocularities being delivered in the tone and manner of common conversation, the victim generally thought himself indebted to fortune or accident for his momentary sufferings, rather than to Louise.

“ Then these — letters,” said the baronet, out of temper (we fear there was an adjective between the pronoun and substantive,) “ are, after all, to signify nothing ! What concern had she with my opinions ? or, if once interested, to what am I to attribute her present apathy, if not to the inherent sins of her sex ? But this can be nothing to me ; — my mind wants occupation ; I have nothing to do, nothing to feel, nothing to think of. I must travel — when I get a little more leisure.”

Sir Charles was a proud and shy man ; and he began to wonder what was the matter with him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ANOTHER walking excursion took place, and formed quite an event in the now still life of Beechwood. Sir Charles had looked forward to it with an anxiety which he in vain endeavoured to repress ; and when the morning actually came, he arose from his lair, with a superstitious consciousness weighing upon his mind, that *something was to happen*. When he looked out of the window of his apartment, he found that the sky was without the smallest speck ; and this seemed to him a circumstance of very ominous meaning : the other blinds, however, were still closed, like the eyelids of the inmates, and he retreated hastily into the back settlements of the room, oppressed by all the horrors of a guilty conscience. It was at length, however, broad morning ; for he could see the labourers in the distant fields leaning wearily on their implements of toil, and turning a long look towards their expected dinner. He mounted his horse, proceeded to Beechwood, and entered the breakfast-parlour, slowly and hesitatingly, the last of the party.

It was indeed a glorious morning ; and the baronet was perhaps the only one of the group who did not evidence a more than usual excitation of the spirits. The gaiety of Louise was like that of a lark ; its wildness only fettered by a kind of graceful pride, which, while carrying it beyond imitation, confined it, at the same time, within the bounds of sympathy. Her humour was less quiet than usual, and yet even more innocent ; and Sir Charles, while gazing unobserved on her really beautiful face, felt his thoughts revert, he knew not by what power, to those days of childhood which the wearied and disappointed fancy of maturer years paints as the lost paradise of life.

When fairly embarked, however, in their adventurous enterprise of a walk of three miles, many circumstances occurred, which although individually insignificant, served in the aggregate to re-awaken the scepticism of the baronet — lulled to sleep, as it appeared, by nothing more than a change in the weather ! The business of getting underway is always a delicate affair ; and our party, although in a “certain set,” had by no means the honour of including themselves in that circle in which every thing comes as a matter of course. There were various expressions of the face, turns of the ankle, and modulations of the voice, when the pretty pedestrians found themselves traversing the common earth like so many milkmaids, that Sir Charles did not like. Men are always severe judges of women ; but a man of society, when he happens at the same time to be a man of sensibility, is very chary indeed of his indulgence — not to talk of approbation. Louise, in fact, with

all her polished simplicity, appeared, in the eyes of the fastidious baronet, affected ; and although he could not but allow that it was a becoming and amiable-looking foible, yet it drove his ideas into unpleasant associations.

The baronet, it will be observed, belonged to that class of sensible men (comprehending perhaps all the few sensible men on this terraqueous globe) who believe that a woman, brought up from infancy to artificial life, ought to exhibit the unconsciousness of a savage ; and that the very joints and muscles of her limbs, however controlled by the trappings of society, should move in all the freedom of nature ! Sir Charles did not comprehend that the *manner* imposed by education comprehends not only the air and gait of the body, but the surface of the mind itself.

The excitement of exercise, however, effected wonders for both parties. Louise's colour began to heighten, and her eyes to flash ; her spirits rose to still higher buoyancy ; and Sir Charles, while gazing upon her, in the midst of his uncharitable strictures, could not help thinking of the Vicar of Wakefield's lovely daughter, with swelling cheeks and dishevelled hair, "*bawling for fair play !*" No human being can resist the infection of such innocent joy as is inspired by nature and good health ; the baronet's heart began at last to leap within him ; and perhaps in that brief hour, his communings with Louise, although of so trivial a nature that they could not even be repeated by the memory, were of greater potency than a whole year of sentimental intercourse.

At an early period of their walk, they passed a

small party of gipsies, sauntering along in the usual manner of that vagabond people. A little cart, drawn by a single donkey, contained the worldly substance of the family, and beside it walked the husband, a sort of youthful patriarch, whose form was a perfect model of graceful strength, while his dusky countenance betrayed the passions of a fiend. He did not raise his head as the gay pedestrians passed, but looked at them for an instant from beneath his scowling brows, and then turned his eyes again upon the road as if counting his steps. At his heels trudged sturdily two little bare-legged boys; and behind, though at a considerable distance, came the mother, a woman still young, and adorned with that kind of wild beauty which pleases the imagination in a picture, but which can no more touch the heart of a civilized man than the graceful spots of the leopard. There was a kind of sullen determination about her lips which gave a singular effect to the physiognomy; and the gloom which lowered upon her brow, taken in conjunction with the fiercer gloom of the husband, and the constrained silence of the children, seemed to prove that one of those family jars had occurred, which are, to all appearance, an indispensable part of the household crockery in every establishment.

The appearance of the cortege was an *event* in the journey which excited an interest corresponding to its magnitude; and here the baronet and Louise suddenly found themselves on different sides of the way. The former was disposed to regard the phenomenon in the mood sentimental; while the latter unfortunately found in it only such illustrations of the comic as her gay and happy spirit

delighted to seize. This was a staggerer for the baronet, who had become critical and suspicious in his very enjoyment. "Is this fair creature," said he to himself, "made up entirely of smiles? Where be the tears which I once thought the peculiar property of woman — that divine dew which preserves her heart, even in the midst of the poison of society, for ever sweet, and pure, and fresh? Is she a being intended merely to flutter in the sunshine, and wanton among the flowers? Will not this current of her happy thoughts, like yonder stream which now leaps along in light and music through the trees, shrink and freeze at the touch of misery, the winter of the mind? An instrument that can only utter tones of joy is well enough in its season — but how often does such music jar upon the nerves, till the heart curses the voice of the charmer, charm she ever so wisely!" Sir Charles walked on in silence, absorbed in his meditations, while the gaiety of Louise became every moment more sparkling. Her sallies were received with laughter, and applauded by the rest of the party; and at length, having in vain attempted to excite the sympathy of the baronet, she suddenly relinquished his arm on some frivolous pretence, and attached herself permanently to the more amusing part of the company.

"I knew it," thought Sir Charles, with a bitter smile; "I knew it! Go, lovely trifler, where thou art called; go, bask thou in the sun; go, warble in the grove; go dance on the green; go, herd with the gay, the prosperous and the idle. Good heaven! how unfit is such a woman to be a wife! where would *she* be in the storms of adversity?

what consolation, what sympathy could I expect from *her* in the trials of life? Would that restless spirit gleam still and steady, like a night-taper, by my bed of sickness? would those lustrous lips, pressed to mine at the moment of death, whisper to my parting soul of the immortality of love?—Well may Addison say that the name of wife is the most beautiful sound in nature: but alas! its sweetness is only that of a tone; its beauty only that of a dream."

The party had reached the term of their pilgrimage, and were now on their return, when a sudden change took place in the atmosphere, and the hapless wayfarers were exposed to the pitiless peltting of a shower. It was in vain for Louise to assure her companions that the drops were sweeter and more fragrant than all the perfumed water in the world, and to desire them only to fancy that they were sprinkled on purpose! Her reasoning had no effect, even with herself; *sauve qui peut!* was the word; and all took to flight as vehemently as if they had been exposed to a fire of musketry. They were at this time in a wood, which bordered Lord Bransby's grounds; and when running from tree to tree for shelter, each of the gentlemen took care to conduct his fair charges in the direction of Beechwood. The baronet, alone, (under whose protection our selfish Louise had again placed herself) being a meditative person, was able to devise a plan still more politic as well as gallant, and led the young lady to a cottage where she was known, with the intention of sending home for a carriage. To do him justice, it was his wish to have extended the benefit of this ingenious scheme to the whole of the

ladies ; but each fair one appeared to have an oracle of her own to listen to ; and when Sir Charles and Louise reached the cottage, the rest were out of sight.

The cottagers, unfortunately, were out at work, and a little child was the only one they found in the house. It was therefore necessary, either that the gentleman should himself dare the weather, in the service of the lady's bonnet, or that both should endure, as patiently as they might, a *tête-à-tête*, till relieved. The latter alternative was insisted upon by Louise, and the baronet would probably have submitted to his destiny with a good grace — but for one unselfish consideration. The dining-room at Beechwood was that day to receive a party, according to Louise's own heart ; she had looked forward to it with pleasant expectation for some time ; and she had even wished to postpone the present excursion, for fear of anything occurring which might, by possibility, interfere with the afternoon arrangements. Under such circumstances Sir Charles conceived it to be his duty, as a man of gallantry, to sacrifice his own wishes to hers ; and in spite of her polite entreaties, he darted out of the cottage, and was soon lost among the trees. Whether Louise's pleasure equalled her admiration of this exodus, we do not mean to inquire ; but certain it is, that she stood at the window for some time after the baronet disappeared, and that a shade fell upon her sunny brow, which seemed to signify that she was not, upon the whole, particularly well satisfied with the result of pedestrianism.

By the time Sir Charles reached Beechwood, the shower had ceased, and the persons he consulted

there ridiculed the idea of taking a carriage so far round as would be necessary. Thinking, therefore, that it would be all the better if he could transport the prisoner without making a circuit, he armed himself with cloaks and umbrellas, and returned to whence he came, as the crow flies. The baronet, however, was destined to be unfortunate ; for he had no sooner come within sight of the cottage than it began to rain in right-down earnest. The sky was patched in its whole circumference with masses of dark cloud, that seemed to try emulously which should discharge its contents first ; the wind moaned mysteriously through the forest ; and the dripping trees, a little while ago so beautiful, presented an aspect of such wildness and desolation, that Sir Charles might easily have fancied himself on the brink of an adventure somewhat more important than the escort of a young lady across her father's park through the rain.

On leaving the grounds of Beechwood, he fell in with the same gipsy he had seen before, followed by his two sons. On this occasion the woman was not of the party ; and it occurred to Sir Charles, that in the manner of driving the little cart, and in the stride of the man, although he did not by any means run, there was an appearance of haste and disorder. As he passed, the little boys looked another way ; and the father kept his eyes fixed moodily on the ground. Sir Charles was sure that all was not right ; and the very fact of such idle and indolent vagabonds choosing a thunder-shower to travel in, seemed to prove that their expedition had not a very legitimate object. The circumstance, common-place as it was, had some interest in the

eyes of a country gentleman ; but we only mention it here, on account of a rather singular coincidence which it speedily appeared to present.

When the baronet approached the cottage, he could not help owning to himself that he had expected to see Louise at the window — or even the door — watching for his appearance ! How such a fancy had come into his head we cannot say. Men, however, are in general very odd and unreasonable persons ; and at that trying era of their lives, when they are *thinking* of falling in love, it would scarcely be fair to include them in the list of accountable beings. However this may be, it was with a slow, if not methodical step, that the baronet crossed the threshold ; and as he walked into the little parlour, a shade might have been detected on his face, too closely analogous with the state of the atmosphere. Louise was not in the room. This was well ; it accounted for her unkindness ! He waited a moment — a minute — two minutes. All was still. He tapped, then knocked, then rapped, then rattled at the door of the inner room (the cottage consisting only of two apartments) — no answer. He peeped, looked, walked in — Louise was not there — Louise was not in the house !

The little child lay asleep upon the bed ; and with one rapid glance, the baronet possessed himself of every detail which it was necessary to inquire into. The bed had been made, the room arranged, and the child washed ; its night-cap was neatly pinned, and the clothes smoothed around it with a nice and delicate care. If it was possible to suppose that the gay and fastidious Louise could have done all this — and the baronet felt a strange

kind of watery sensation in his eyes as the idea occurred to him — her exit from the cottage must have been made with perfect coolness and leisure. How to account for her exit at all was the question. There was no direct path to Beechwood but the one he had himself taken, and the carriage road was too circuitous to be thought of. He ran in sudden alarm to the door, and threw an eager glance of impatience upon the threshold. His own foot-prints were the only marks upon the white stone — no one had entered the house since he had left it. What was more strange, however, was, that Louise's reticule and parasol lay upon the table !

He awoke the child, and gathered from its indistinct and slumbering replies, that the shower had been at its height when the lady made him say his prayers, and washed him and put him to bed, because he was so sleepy. The infant also said something about a *scream*. Was it the lady who screamed ? He could not tell. The thought of the gipsy flashed across the inquirer's mind, and he rushed out of the cottage.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

To attempt to follow the gipsy and his sons would have been vain ; for at the time Sir Charles had seen them they were not on the beaten track, but journeying along through the trees, like free denizens of the forest. Even if he could hope to overtake them, however, what purpose could it serve ? Louise was not with them ; and even if guilty of any of the crimes which his imagination conjured up in mystic and indefinite array, it was not to be supposed that they would plead guilty.—Crimes ! What crimes ? The victim a noble lady—almost within sight of her ancestral home—surrounded at short distances by the dependents of her family—the time broad daylight—the place, the precincts of her father's residence ! The idea was absurd. He blushed for having entertained it even for one moment ; he reverted with a painful shame to those days of his unripe age, when even the parallelograms of this civilized world were like wildernesses to him ; and, with a moderate pace, and a smooth brow, he walked away from the cottage ; his eye, notwithstanding, was restless and gloomy ; and his heart continued to quake

after he had convinced himself that there was nothing to fear !

He remembered that in a particular part of the wood, not very far from the cottage, he had observed a wreath of smoke curling up through the trees ; and he remembered it the more distinctly, that he had made the phenomenon (so incongruous with the scene in its domestic associations) a pretext for endeavouring — and in vain — to discover whether there was not in reality, some fund of feeling concealed even by the very brilliance of his mistress's imagination. This smoke was in the line of path by which the gipsy and his sons had appeared to travel, and it arose, therefore, in all probability from their encampment.

While breaking through the interlaced shrubs with the impetuosity of a beast of the forest, the thoughts of Sir Charles more than kept pace with the rapidity of his motions. Mingling with these, however, there was an idea of the fantastic and the *improbable*, which threw an air almost of ridicule upon his terror. Had the heroine of the mystery been any human being but Louise, the thing might have been understood, or at least there would have seemed to be no such exorbitant deviation from the general scheme of providence. But she, the gay, the light-hearted, the quiet even in her gaiety, the graceful in her light-heartedness, the cool, the self-possessed, in a word, the *lady-like*! — why, it must be a dream — a night-mare ! Had she been suddenly abstracted from a quadrille in the very middle of the “cat's tail,” it would not have been more wonderful. There was an incongruity in the circumstances which confused the

mind — a practical solecism in the nature of things more frightful than any committed by the Cilician Greeks against the speech of Athens.

The black heavens, heavy and thunder-charged — the wailing trees flinging their tears upon the storm — the rain-steeped earth on which the foot fell with a sullen splash — were there the adjuncts of a scene of which this “ gay creature of the elements” was the heroine ! Sir Charles was almost ready to pause and turn back, as his lover’s imagination thus exaggerated the contrast. But then the scream ! — the lonely cottage, rendered still more lonely by the storm ! — the black and sullen looks of the gipsy, and the averted eyes of his sons, as they hurried past like personifications of guilty fear ! He almost uttered a cry as these spectres rose upon his senses ; and when at length he saw the miserable encampment of the outcasts before him, it was with trembling limbs, and a quaking heart, that he approached it.

He stole up to the entrance with noiseless step ; he scarcely breathed — so intensely did he listen for some sound which might at least give form to his apprehensions, that were at present the more terrible from their very vagueness. All, however, was silent — as silent as death. He withdrew his hand from the piece of canvas that served as a door, and staggered, with a feeling of faintness, to the ragged aperture which was the only window in the tent, and looked in.

At first the scene was so indistinct, that its things and persons looked like shadows ; but when his sense of vision began to accommodate itself to the dusky medium through which it was exercised, the

picture revealed to his wondering eyes was quite as strange as that which had haunted his imagination. The *dramatis personæ* were two females. One lay upon a scanty matress of loose straw; this attitude betrayed the languor, without the rigidity of death; and the bloodless, though dark face, in which the lustrous eyes were opened to their fullest extent, showed so strangely in the gloom, that Sir Charles felt a qualm of that indefinite fear which sometimes thickens the blood of boyhood. One hand was upon her bosom, where a deep red stain appalled and sickened the heart of the witness; while the other pressed, with a feeble but anxious grasp, the hand of her companion. It was the young wife of the gipsy who lay before him; struck down so suddenly in her rich and sultry beauty; and her companion, kneeling by her side, her head bending over hers, and her eyes fixed upon her face — was Louise !

A deep sigh spoke the relief which Sir Charles had received, but it did not disturb the magical stillness of the scene. The wind had died away as suddenly as it had commenced; the large heavy rain-drops fell vertically to the earth with a sullen and monotonous sound; and the wailing voice of the forest had sunk to that inarticulate whisper which runs through the trees even when the leaves are stilllest.

An expression of pain at last escaped the lips of the gipsy woman, and a momentary convulsion passed across her features. She spoke; but it was in a voice so feeble, and in language so obscured by the patois of the tribe, that Sir Charles could not at first comprehend what she said.

“ You are still here ?” continued she — “ speak to me ; let me hear your voice. My hand is so cold, I cannot feel yours, and my eyes grow dim.”

“ I am here.”

“ Who is that ? — there, at the bottom, gliding round the wall — and now behind me, bending down over my head. — Ah ! — ” and the dying woman shrunk and shivered.

“ There is no one here but me,” said Louise, laying her hand gently on her forehead. “ Be assured that I will not leave you alone ; — yet, if you think it can be of any use even now, I shall fly for assistance.”

“ O ! no — no — no ! remember your promise ! for mercy’s sake, do not leave me alone ! I understand you ! ” continued she, after a pause, while a bitter smile played for an instant on her lip — “ It is not *for* assistance you would fly, but *from* the death-bed of the outcast ! Your rich dinner and proud company are waiting ; the wine sparkles in the cup, and the dainty meats breathe over the table. While here ! — look at that ragged canvas, which, instead of excluding the air, only adds dampness to its coldness — see the carpet for your foot, of the slippery mud and the wet straw ! — Away, and leave me to die ! Why should I expect you to remain ? What am I, the homeless gipsy, the outcast vagabond of the earth, to an earl’s daughter ? You weep ! why do you weep ? what am I ? answer me that.”

“ You are a woman ! ” cried Louise, clasping her hand as she wept on it. “ O my sister, you are a woman ! The distinctions of rank and fortune, lowliness and poverty, vanish at a moment like

this. Think not of them, I beseech you ! You are dying ; you already belong more to the future than to the present ; endeavour to compose your mind. Can you pray ? Shall I teach you a prayer ? Will you join me in spirit if I pray for you ?" The gipsy smiled gently, half in pity, half in scorn. Louise wrung her hands.

" You have been hardly used in the world," continued she — " that I believe, that I know ; but, at so awful a moment, I trust you will forget your injuries. Tell me, do you part in good will ? Do you forgive, more especially, your — your — murderer ?"

" Hush !" cried the gipsy, suddenly rising up on her elbow, and throwing a terrified glance round the tent — " Hush ! I say, hush ! How dare you name that word ? Woman, have you forgotten your promise ? You say I screamed ? — it is false ! or, if I did, it was from the pain of the wound I inflicted on myself in a fit of madness. Is this your christianity — to swear away men's lives ? My lord judge, it is false ! — it is a lie ! Would you hang an innocent man ? Nay, never look at me with those burning eyes, but say at once ' Not guilty ! ' Why should you hesitate, when *I* do not ? Not guilty ! — I say it with my last breath — Not guilty, upon my life ! — Not guilty, upon my soul ! — Not guilty ! not guilty !" and she fell back, apparently in the convulsions of death ; but, in a few moments, rallying a little, she covered her eyes with her hand.

" I never loved another !" said she in a low and broken voice — " he is the love of my youth — the father of my children. For ten years have I fol-

lowed his footsteps, trudging behind him in the wind and rain, basking beside him in the sun, bearing his burdens, smiling with his smiles, and weeping with his sorrow. The gloomy fit was on him, or he would not have done it. He did not mean it for more than a moment ; and if that moment was fatal, is he to blame ? He already repents — I know he does. Who will cook his meals for him now ? who will wash his clothes ! who will beg for him ? who will steal for him ? he will call me, and I shall not hear ; he will put out his hands, and will not feel me : and then he will be sorry ; his heart will be sad and lonely, and he will hide his face in the straw, — and — and — yes, I think, I believe, I am sure he will weep !” The chest of the poor wife rose with inward sobs as she spoke, and tears gushed between her fingers.

“ Weep freely,” said Louise, in a scarcely articulate voice — “ God will have mercy on a soul that parts at peace with the world.”

“ You remember ?” whispered the gipsy faintly — “ you will not witness against him ?”

“ I will not. Perhaps the promise may be wrong — but I will not. Can I do, or say anything else to quiet your mind ?”

“ A little money, a very little money, would get him out of the kingdom. It is too much to ask — too wild a petition for the poor gipsy ; but if I thought you would send after him — and a horseman would overtake him in a few hours ” —

“ It shall be done,” said Louise.

“ Send not a servant, or you do worse than nothing. Send some one you can trust — some one

whom you would employ in an errand touching your own life and honour. Do you promise this?"

"I do."

"It is enough; — go at once; I can now bear to be alone."

"I will not go till I close your eyes."

"Then do it now. It is not death the gipsy fears; and if she had not listened in her time to the follies of your people, there would be no shadows to affright her. There, close my eyes, and away. Where is your hand — there — there" — and after a brief convulsion, the wanderer was at rest.

Louise closed her eyes, and then clasping her hands, turned up her face towards heaven. In another instant she was at the door of the tent, where she was met by Sir Charles. It was one of those moments in which the conventional rules of society are forgotten, in which the great and the lowly, the rich and the poor, meet as becomes the children of clay, — the offspring of the same parent — the heirs of the same destiny. Louise exhibited no surprise at the meeting; her heart was full, her cheek pale, and her lips bloodless and tremulous. She was about to take the arm of the baronet, without speaking, but he did not move. He gazed in her face for some moments in silence; and then, sinking on his knees, kissed her hand. When he rose up, they walked away together, Louise weeping as she went.

CHAPTER XXXV.

BEFORE dismissing entirely the adventure of the gipsies, it may be well to state, that Sir Charles Freemantle, soon after his return to Beechwood with Louise, and just when the hungry peal of the dinner-bell was at its loudest, mounted his horse, and rode off as suddenly and secretly as a highwayman. Whether any of the company suspected the baronet to have had a hand in the murder, it would be hard to say; but certain it is, that the report of the horrid deed threw a greater damp upon the party than might have been expected from an event which only involved the fate of a gipsy. A still more important and unusual circumstance, however, was, that Louise was pale and out of spirits; and this, taken in conjunction with Sir Charles's disappearance, gave rise to a thousand speculations. The prevailing belief was, that the baronet had proposed to his fair companion to extend their excursion through life; and that Louise was now worrying herself to death for having refused.

Sir Charles, in the meantime, followed the track

of the gipsy; and by means of information obtained at the villages, and from labourers in the fields, succeeded in falling in with him at a place about eighteen miles from Beechwood. It was in a cross-road, or lane, half a mile from the main road. There was no wind; the evening had set in, and a heavy drizzling rain fell upon the already soaked earth from the dull, calm sky. The scene of itself would have been reckoned peculiarly cheerless; but when he saw the father and his two little boys crouched under the dripping hedge, covered only by a blanket, the horror and detestation with which he regarded the ruffian assumed a milder character. He jumped from his horse, however, and stirred him roughly with his foot.

“Is she dead, then?” said the man, raising his head. “You are come to take me.”

“She is dead, accursed villain! Do you repent the deed?”

“What is the use of repenting? it will not bring her to life again.”

“Do you desire to bring her to life again?”

“Do not trouble me! I am ready to go with you. When I am hanged I shall only be dead, like her.”

“Will you tell me why you slew her?”

“I was vexed the whole day. She opposed me, and I stabbed her — that is all.

“Intending to slay her?”

“If the knife had not been in my hand the blow would not have killed her. But why do you tease me with questions? What is it to you how it happened? A simple confession will hang me, and what

more do you want? I have slain her, and I must die; — take me away."

" She forgave you with her last breath; she wished you to escape; — for her sake I spare your life." The fellow was silent for some moments.

" Where am I to go?" said he surlily; " I have no one now to do anything for me; I have no shelter from the weather — for I left her the tent to die in."

" You must leave the kingdom: your wife bequeathed this purse to her murderer." A wild, wan, eager smile lighted up his swarthy features as he clutched it.

" She could not steal it!" muttered he, between his teeth; — " and who would give gold to a gipsy? But come, boys, I suppose we must go. Put the ass to. There — now, come along." He lingered for a moment, and turned round, as if to see that nothing was forgotten; then, looking in the direction of Beechwood, seemed to hesitate.

" Where is the use?" said he, at last, in a husky voice, " *I am alone!*" and, wheeling about abruptly, he followed the cart, and was soon lost in the shades of evening.

The baronet returned more slowly, sadly, and yet hopefully, musing on the occurrences of a day destined, perhaps, to have a material effect upon the whole of his after-life. The contrast in the characters of the two persons who had thus been thrust so unexpectedly upon his sympathies employed his mind first, and impressed him almost with a feeling of shame. The devoted love of the poor gipsy affected him even to tears. This thing of guilt and misery — how beautiful did she seem

in her guilt, how admirable in her misery! Excluded, even from her birth, from the scheme of civilised society—thrust forth from the pale, the Pariah of her nation—an outcast and a vagabond upon the earth; without knowledge, without law, without religion, without even the idea of a futurity, she yet remained—a woman!

Yes, a woman! It was in vain to deceive himself; it was in vain to resort yet again to his hollow philosophy; and in spite of the unworthy struggles of his pride, his heart flew back to its first convictions. What might not this woman have been, if born under happier stars?—if blessed with education—with the instilled virtues of society—with the lofty aspirations of religion? She might have been—his heart grew soft, his eyes dim, his lip tremulous, as the idea occurred to him—associated with everything pure, and beautiful, and amiable, and high-minded, of that fair being who had knelt by the pallet of the dying gipsy. The earl's daughter and the wandering out-cast! were they not one originally, however widely sundered by circumstances? Had not their identity been recognised and acknowledged even by her who, in all qualities both of rank and intellectual attainment, was to the other like an angel to a mortal? Did not Louise, while mingling her tears with the blood of the dying wanderer, exclaim—“O my sister, *you are a woman!*”

The contemplation of the man's conduct was less satisfactory. The deed, dreadful as it was, might have been palliated by the consideration of the habits of his desperate life; but there seemed

to be an inherent selfishness in his character, which could only inspire disgust. That he had loved the wife whom he slew, as well as such a man could love, was evident; but his grief was not because she was dead, but because he was *alone*. He “had no one to do anything for him;” he had no companion; his habits had been suddenly broken off; the association of his mind suddenly snapped—the fatal blow had occasioned a sort of moral concussion through his whole being. He did not know what he was about; accustomed to act in concert, he felt an unwillingness to proceed alone. A grief of this kind, if it can be called a grief, is easily banished; at every step of his journey he would leave it further behind; every new associate would replace an old one. This is usually the case with the regret of men. They try to get rid of it in the turmoil of the world; and they succeed. A woman, on the contrary, retires to brood over the calamity in the solitude of her own heart; and, like a wounded dove, conceals the barb that is rankling in the springs of her life and happiness.

When the baronet returned to Beechwood, he found that Louise had retired for the night, complaining of a head-ache; but he sent a verbal message to inform her that he “had executed her commission,”—and the next morning she thanked him warmly for the considerate attention.

The meetings of these two personages of our story were no longer enveloped in the outside politeness of society; no flourish of ceremony precluded their entrances or exits; a circumstance strictly fortuitous, if any thing can be called so in this

world, had introduced them, for the first time, to the acquaintance of each other; and it was surprising how suddenly, in common parlance, the ice had broken. The reader will comprehend, however, that although the artificial distinctions were withdrawn which had hedged them round as individuals, those appertaining to their rank and station in society, remained in full force. Sir Charles did not think of dropping upon the carpet and kissing Louise's hand; and Louise, even when labouring under a fit of the vapours, did not seize upon the baronet's arm uninvited, and weep as she walked. The occurrence that had taken place was an exception to their every-day, and perhaps really insignificant life; and with the tact of persons of the world, they but rarely alluded to the topic.

When an allusion did take place, it was always made by the gentleman; and somehow or other, it always came out at that precise point of time, when the rest of the company were at the furthest possible distance which it was reasonable to expect. If this was the baronet's fault, he was of course much to blame.

"The subject," said he, on one of these occasions, "is necessarily a disagreeable one; but will you permit me to ask why it is peculiarly so at present? there is a shade upon your usually clear brow, and a gloom in your eye, such as I have rarely—perhaps never observed—since the day of the catastrophe,"

"You are complimentary, Sir Charles," replied Louise, with a faint smile; "but if you will observe my face, I wish you would not confine yourself

to the eclipses. I have been thinking, however, of that miserable man, and of his lonely fate."

" The word 'fate,' I think, is misapplied, for it presents him only as an object of commiseration—the sport of a power which he could not resist. In the present case, the man *made* his fate."

" The distinction is too subtle for me. He loved his wife, and therefore I cannot think that he intended to kill her."

" And yet, were you to see him now, I fear your charitable opinions would change. He has in all probability forgotten the deed and the temporary pain it occasioned him."

" Then it is not to us poor women alone that you are severe? You judge even of men by the outside manner, which is commonly called the hypocrisy of the world. Perhaps you imagine that in the station of the gipsy there is no such thing as hypocrisy? Alas! human nature is the same in every rank, and the character of the unfortunate homicide is as inscrutable, through the changes of his features, and the tones of his voice, as if he held the station of a prince. Your theory is, that his grief was selfishness. Be it so: I will not dispute with you about a word. But what a strange thing is this selfishness! It is virtue, it is vice, it is the absence of both. Till the metaphysicians adopt a new nomenclature, I fear we shall never understand one another."

" I fear not! What had the conduct of the gipsy woman to do with this universal principle?"

" Everything. In her station of life, to be the servant of her husband was her duty; and love,

uniting with habit, had made it her happiness. Her happiness was bound up with that of her husband ; and the sudden blow of a dagger had no power to separate the two ideas."

" This is all very amiable," said the baronet, with a smile, " and, I dare say, very philosophical : but you must allow, at least, that the selfishness of the wife was something very different from that of the husband—that the balance of virtue, in short, was in favour, as it always must be, of your charming sex."

" What a wonderful sentiment from Sir Charles Freemantle ! yet I am not to be flattered into defeat. The feeling was the same on both sides, in spite of the difference in its untoward manifestations. The loneliness of which the man complained was the *absence of his wife* ! Suppose that the idea had preyed upon his mind ; that this great strong man of thirty-five had found it impossible to attend to his own affairs — that he became restless, miserable, almost mad — that, instead of flying from the country with the funds with which we provided him, he had gone voluntarily before a magistrate, and confessed his crimes, and, with a sigh of relief, entered the prison, conscious he should only leave it to be conducted to the scaffold ?"—

" Were this the case, I should own myself to be mistaken."

" Then read !" and Louise put a newspaper into the baronet's hand, pointing to a paragraph, in which he read, as a fact, the case she had just stated hypothetically. Sir Charles was moved — he grasped her hand, without knowing why. She

blushed slightly, and then added, to what she called her lesson :—

“ Believe me, my friend, human nature is a very good thing — even in woman. We may laugh at its absurdities, and decry its selfishness — but, after all, it is not unworthy of its Creator !”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MR. DE TRACEY, in compliance with the friendly wishes of Lord Bransby, had consented to fix his residence at Beechwood during the remainder of his stay in Derbyshire; an arrangement that perfectly harmonized with the feelings of his son, who was, by so agreeable a plan, spared the perplexity of a divided study, and enabled to enjoy the constant society both of his father and his lady love. The former, from the melancholy misanthrope, had changed into the intelligent, gentlemanly companion, whose superior, yet unpretending talents, could not fail to win esteem, while the natural dignity of his manners excited admiration, and commanded respect.

Such was De Tracey (for he still retained that name) when he again took his proper station in the world; all the warm affections that had so long lain dormant in his heart, renovated on finding an object upon which they might rest, secure of being met with reciprocal ardour: and they were so met by

the sensitive Osselin, who regarded his parent as the best and noblest of human beings.

The first surprise of “the revolution,” as Louise emphatically styled the various alterations that had taken place, having gradually subsided, Beechwood had become one continued scene of festivity. In addition to the increase in the number of its inmates, Dufforth and Talbot were now constant visitors, and the charming Adelaide was introduced into the family circle, to which she was no inconsiderable ornament.

“I hope you have received a card for the breakfast, Sir Charles?” said Louise, as she walked, leaning on his arm, round a beautiful parterre, while the evening breeze stole softly through the boughs, refreshing the air after the oppressive heat of a sultry day.

“And why does Miss Bransby *hope* so? Does she really mean that she is interested in the question she asks?”

“She meant nothing of the kind, I assure you. In a sentence so perfectly common-place, *hope* is a mere word of course; but if you object to the expression, I will with pleasure withdraw it, and substitute I *trust*, or any other less demurral word.”

“Nay — do not take from me the hope you have but this moment given; even if it were involuntary.”

“Oh! it is quite fair to give and take: excuse the inelegance of the phrase, but I like those little proverbial expressions, by which we are reminded of our childish days.”

“The lives of some,” said Sir Charles, thoughtfully, “are a continued series of childish days.”

“ Oh, fie ! Sir Charles ; I did not think you were so satirical, and am almost inclined to quarrel with you ; but you have not yet answered my question ; and I really do hope you are going, for all the little world of Derbyshire will be there ; and as topics for conversation are not very abundant in the country, it will be a pity to lose so excellent a one.”

“ I think I may retort the accusation of being satirical ; but tell me, can you candidly affirm that this will be to you an *agreeable* topic also ?” and he looked steadfastly at her as he spoke.

“ Why should you doubt it ?” replied Louise. “ Entertaining it certainly must be, for it is scarcely two months since the parties were entire strangers to each other ; and from the observations I have made on both, I am assured that ‘ éclat ’ is their sole object, and that not one spark of affection animates either of them.”

“ Do you not think it rather melancholy, than entertaining, that two such people should enter into so sacred a compact ; and, with perhaps not one single sentiment in unison, consent to pass the whole of their future lives together ?”

“ If such every-day occurrences as these were to make us melancholy, smiles would soon become a rarity, and a laugh quite obsolete. Besides, the Duke of Belltown would be petrified with astonishment to hear himself spoken of as an object of pity — he, who never dreamed of exciting any sentiment less flattering than envy.”

“ Yet this is the man in whose society you have often appeared to take great pleasure.”

Louise blushed, as she recollects her aunt’s ad-

monitions on this very subject, and Sir Charles continued —

“ With such an opinion of him, how could you possibly feel any gratification in his conversation ? ”

“ Pour passer le temps ! and after all, there is nothing very extraordinary in being amused with the ridiculous.”

“ Yet he would naturally suppose you were pleased, as well as amused, then how are we to know when a woman is sincere ; if indeed, she ever be sincere.”

“ Which Sir Charles Freemantle very much doubts,” said Louise ; “ but I will tell him, when a man, like the Duke of Belltown, is so completely engrossed by his own person, that his heart is incapable of admitting any other object, and his mind of engendering a thought unconnected with *self* ; when he devotes his whole soul to the study of attitudes and dress ; when he is so entirely armed with vanity and self-love, that there is no possibility of wounding his feelings thus rendered invulnerable ; a woman may be excused for playing the coquette, and laughing at his folly ; and this species of flirtation, if you choose to give it that name, is so perfectly harmless, I may almost say, laudable (as it tends to correct what is wholly unbecoming in man), that it ought not to be censured. But when a man is, what *man* ought to be, the woman would merit his contempt who did not treat him with sincerity.”

“ I see you will teach me to believe at last ; but I shall unwillingly renounce my errors, in the fear of losing such delightful lessons.”

“ I am very much afraid I shall have to resume my lectures now and then—but mind, I do not undertake to put you in the right way, if you wilfully go astray.”

“ Be then my guide through life !” said he impassionately, “ and I never can go astray.”

“ Do you venture to promise so much ?” said Louise, casting her eyes on the ground.

“ I’ll promise anything — everything.”

“ No—no—that is too much ; and if you are so lavish of your promises, I shall begin to doubt *your* sincerity.”

“ Miss Bransby—dearest Louise !—do not trifle with me ; for on this subject I cannot bear it : then let me entreat you to be serious, and generously at once, either confirm my hopes, or annihilate them : but do not treat me as if I were ‘ a Duke of Bell-town,’ and ridicule my pretensions, presumptuous though they may be.”

“ If I had intended to do so, Sir Charles,” said Louise, with still more timidity of manner, “ I should not have listened to you thus far. Now, are you satisfied ?”

Sir Charles said all that happy lovers say on similar occasions ; but as the conversation grew more interesting to them, it would proportionably increase in insipidity to the reader, and we will pursue it no further.

Love performs more wonders than the most skilful mountebank that ever handled bells and balls. It has prostrated the mighty, it has elevated the humble ; it is one of the two great main-springs by which the vast machinery of the world is governed.

It shares the universe with ambition, and it is difficult to determine which of these despotic rulers is the most powerful. In the present instance it had overcome the prejudices of years ; — before its all-subduing influence, doubts, reasonings, and resolves, had vanished like a summer cloud.

The following day Lord Bransby gave a private audience to Sir Charles Freemantle, the result of which was highly satisfactory to both parties, and did not long remain a secret ; but there was one person who was any thing but *pleased* at the discovery ; this was Captain Arlington, who, though far from being a coxcomb, had ventured to indulge a hope that Louise had regarded him with a favourable eye ; and her natural propensity to a little flirtation, had contributed to confirm him in this error.

Too impetuous for much consideration, he seized the first available opportunity to prefer his suit, and this happened at the very time the baronet was making his proposals to Lord Bransby.

With as much regard to his feelings as possible, Louise frankly confessed the truth ; and deeply mortified as he was at this rejection, he could not but feel pleased and grateful for the ingenuous and delicate manner in which it was conveyed.

In an agitated voice, he thanked her for her candour, and pressing her hand to his lips, left her truly sorry for the pain she had given to a man she really admired and esteemed ; and she almost wished it had been in her power to repay his love with a warmer feeling than regard. Captain Arlington could not remain at Beechwood after the disappointment he had met with ; therefore, taking

an affectionate leave of Lavinia, and promising to revisit Derbyshire before his departure for India, he returned to town, where the change of scene, and his buoyant spirits, soon restored his mind to its wonted tranquillity.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SOON after the commencement of the shooting season, Lieutenant Sellwood, according to the promise he had made to Sir Charles Freemantle, brought his gun down to Myrtlewood, a sight of horror for the partridges, pheasants, and others of the feathered tribe who were about to depart this life on the shortest possible notice.

“What, my old friend, the poet!” said he, shaking hands with Talbot, “how goes on sonneteering, my boy? This is a devilish deal more commodious spot for your flirtations with the Nine, than your two yards square cabin; plenty of room for flights of fancy; and plenty of blue eyes too, and coral lips, I doubt not, to supply themes for a dozen such verse makers.”

“I have had nothing to do with the Nine since I landed,” replied Talbot. “They were excellent companions to while away the tedious hours on board the *Minerva*; but there I left them.”

“You have done the world an essential service,” said Dufforth, “in effecting so close an alliance between *Minerva* and the *Muses*: a consummation

devoutly to be wished, and what few poets besides yourself have been able to accomplish."

"Egad! that's true — his name ought to be immortalized, and a little bronze bust of him stuck up over every book-case in the united kingdom. Faith! Sir Charles, you've a beautiful place here — superb! upon my soul — there is but one thing wanting to make it a perfect Elysium."

"He intends shortly to supply that deficiency," said the major, "and he will be a deuced lucky fellow if he does not turn his Elysium into any thing else, by so doing."

Sir Charles smiled, and flattered himself, as most lovers do, that however others had failed of making a heaven of their domicile by placing their angel in it, he was the happy mortal who was destined to succeed.

It was perhaps with a similar idea that the Duke of Belltown was making those preparations that formed the fashionable, and almost exclusive, topic of conversation throughout Derbyshire. His nuptials were to be celebrated in the highest style of magnificence; no expense was to be spared on the occasion; artists of every description were employed in the decorations of the splendid mansion and extensive grounds; and all this ostentatious display was, in reality, for the purpose of mortifying the Bransbys, against whom the noble Duke had indulged a pique ever since the rejection of his hand. So desirous was he of avoiding the suspicion of having met with a refusal, that, on the very same evening that Louise had treated his proposals with such indignity, he offered himself to

Miss Parnell, the beautiful flirt who had once attracted the attention of Osselin Vassor.

Here his offer met with a very different reception, and by thus suddenly changing his battery, and circulating a few hints about being sorry to disappoint the aspiring views of a certain young lady, he fancied himself secure from the imputations he so much dreaded ; but a little side whisper, that came from nobody knew where, buzzed about the true state of the case ; upon which his grace, to perpetrate his dire revenge, actually purchased an estate near Beechwood, and expended an enormous sum upon its improvement, expressly to celebrate his marriage in the sight of Louise, and overwhelm her with mortification on beholding the splendour of which she might have been the mistress : for he still imagined that her refusal had been merely a fit of caprice ; and that if he had condescended to a second solicitation, the case would have been different.

These were the noble minded considerations that influenced the Duke of Belltown in making such a parade of his wedding, which, instead of producing the desired effect upon the unambitious Louise, afforded her an infinity of amusement.

But before the celebration of this grand event, a far more interesting, though less dazzling one, took place at Beechwood, in the double union, on the same day, of Osselin Vassor, and Lionel Bransby. Happiness such as this is of too sacred a nature to be spread abroad, and shared with all the world ; its sanctity is polluted by being made the theme of general conversation, and cause of public festivity. Though a joyful occasion, the purity of its joy is

sullied by the intermingling of strangers, and its solemnization should be only in the midst of friends who are nearest and dearest.

And thus it was at Beechwood, for so privately was the ceremony performed, that not the slightest suspicion of it had entered the minds of any but those who were the most deeply interested in it. Lord Bransby gave away the blooming Adelaide to his son—and Osselin received his beautiful, his adored Caroline, from the hand of De Tracey; who, at the conclusion of the ceremony clasped both his children to his heart, with feelings of ex-tacy and gratitude too powerful for utterance. This blissful moment amply repaid him for all the sorrows of his past life, and he felt that he now might be truly happy.

“ Oh ! Emily ; this is an awful sort of thing”—said Louise, after the newly married pairs had taken their departure, on a tour to the lakes of Cumberland : “ I do not know how I shall ever make up my mind to it.”

“ It is indeed,”— sighed Emily :— “ I have felt more melancholy to-day than I ever did before. What can be the reason that an event which is looked upon by all the world, as a cause of rejoicing, should depress the spirits of all who are concerned in it ?”

“ And more especially of those who are conscious that their time is approaching,” said Louise—“ and that, I suppose, is the case with you and me.”

Emily burst into tears—“ Oh ! Louise ; if they are sad who expect always to remain surrounded by their friends ; what must those feel who, by entering into this solemn engagement, condemn

themselves to an eternal separation from the home of their youth, from all whom they have ever loved :—dearest Louise, how shall I ever be able to leave you ? I never — never can consent to it!"

" My dear girl, I shall be equally grieved at parting from you, if such must be the case ; but it will not be for ever, Emily — Mr. Talbot does not intend to pass all his life in India ; besides, he will remain in England yet a year longer ; so why make yourself uneasy about an evil that is still at so great a distance, and may never occur at all ?—and when it does come, if come it must, depend upon it, you will be like most other wives, ready to follow your husband any where, and caring little whom you leave behind."

" I cannot believe I shall ever feel this indifference," said Emily, " although we see instances of it every day. It is doubtless very natural ; yet to me there appears a degree of ingratitude in thus giving up every other affection for this one—it is an ordination of Nature that I can never account for."

" Then follow my example, dear ; and content yourself with knowing that it is so, without troubling your little head about the causes that produce this desirable end : in truth, I consider it a very wise and comfortable regulation of Dame Nature ; or how should we poor women ever be tolerably happy, compelled as we are to march after our lords, whithersoever they are pleased to lead ?"

With such reasoning as this, Louise succeeded in calming the spirits of her cousin, which had been exceedingly agitated by the imposing ceremony she had that morning witnessed for the first time ;

and it was some hours ere she recovered her accustomed serenity.

The marriage of Lady Caroline Gresham was no sooner made public than the heir at law who, by the late Earl's testament was to be enriched by this act of opposition on the part of her ladyship, asserted his claims. The property was ceded without litigation, and perhaps no transfer of the same nature was ever made with so little regret.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AFTER a short absence the bridal party returned to Beechwood, in order to be present at the nuptials of the Duke of Belltown, which were now on the eve of taking place.

The morning was ushered in by the ringing of bells at every church within ten miles round ; and at each village within the same distance a *fête-champêtre*, by the order, and at the cost of the duke, was given to the peasantry, whose voices were, in consequence, exalted loud and high in praise of the many virtues of him of whom they knew nothing, except that he had sent them a plentiful supply of good cheer.

Many, therefore, were the libations of strong ale poured out in honour of the noble peer, whose name that day was the theme of every tongue ; and if we might always estimate the character of a man by the voice of the people, that of the Duke of Belltown would have ranked high indeed.

It was only by the partakers of this rough fare, that any sincere pleasure was felt on this occasion ; and that pleasure proceeded from their own per-

sonal enjoyment, not from any real good wishes to “the founder of the feast.”

“Long life to his noble Grace!” was loudly vociferated by hundreds who, in point of fact, were perfectly indifferent as to the term of his Grace’s sojourn upon earth, any further than as any future joyful occasions might bring a renewal of similar festivities.

Of the invited guests who repaired to the more sumptuous banquet, but few there were who had not gone for the express purpose of noting every circumstance that could possibly furnish food for satire: and had every whisper that circulated round the splendid and well-furnished tables, reached the ears of the self-satisfied host, he would have been surprised to find that the magnificence with which he had surrounded his guests failed to inspire the admiration he expected: and least of all did it awaken a sensation of envy or regret in the mind of her for whose vexation so many thousands had been lavished.

The bride appeared elegantly attired, one blaze of diamonds, leaning on the arm of her illustrious lord, who led her round the room where the most distinguished visitors were assembled to receive their compliments and congratulations; and Louise with all her good nature, could not help feeling a degree of contempt at the air of triumph discernible on the features of the newly-made duchess, as she returned her salutation.

But even while passing round the brilliant circle, she was followed by such remarks as these — “Plenty of confidence, however! — Insufferably vain — her father was nobody — not half so hand-

some as I expected — such public marriages very ridiculous ;” and a thousand other observations of the same liberal class — while the pompous duke did not escape his share of criticism.

After this ceremony the bride withdrew, and her mamma, a tall dashing woman, did the honours of the breakfast.

One of the most conspicuous persons present was Mr. Augustus Clayton, who, in spite of his natural insignificance, contrived to render himself so by boring every body with a copy of verses, manufactured purposely for this occasion, by that gentleman, in honour of the noble pair. But poor Augustus could not find one patient listener to repay him for the many days of mental fatigue, and nights of disturbed repose this effort of genius had cost him. The performance itself was a convincing proof of the *labour* it had been to compose it, and no one seemed inclined to take from him any part of the enjoyment of its beauties ; — thus his own approbation was the sole reward of all his toils.

The unfortunate poet, driven to desperation, tried his old resource, but even that failed him now ; for the lady, with maiden pride and dignity, still glowing with the indignation the adventure in the lane had excited against her recreant lover, and reckoning, rather too confidently perhaps, upon the constancy of her martial gallant, treated the bard with scorn. But, alas ! the scorn was premature, and repentance for having exhibited any symptoms of that unflattering sentiment, came too late ; for he never again offered any signs of homage ; and

poor Miss Moreland, though shining like a rainbow, failed to dazzle the eyes of the major, or perhaps dazzled them so much, that he did not venture to look upon the *bright* reality again.

The fact was, he had been introduced by Sellwood to a rich and handsome young widow, extremely lively and attractive, and he was, at this moment, completely engrossed by the fascination of her wit and beauty.

“It is astonishing,” said Miss Moreland, unable to conceal her vexation, “how fond people are of new faces.”

“It would be much more astonishing if they were fond of old ones”—thought Sellwood—but he was too polite to give utterance to so ungallant a sentiment; so merely assented to the proposition.

“Really, Miss Moreland,” said Louise, “I see nothing astonishing in that, any more than in any thing else that has existed since the creation of the world. Did you ever yet meet with man, woman, or child, that was not fond of variety?

“That may be all very natural, and very well in some things,” replied the angry maiden, “but it should not carry people so far as to make them forget their promises.”

“Promises!” replied Louise, “that is quite a minor consideration.”

“I rather think it’s a *major* consideration,” said Sellwood. Louise laughed; but Miss Moreland, not rightly comprehending the allusion, continued to inveigh against the fickleness of mankind in general.

“What think you of the bride?” said Louise to Sir Charles Freemantle.

"I think of her," he replied, "as I once thought of all women, till you taught me to have more discrimination."

"Ah! what a happy thing it was for you that I advocated the cause of reform."

"I own it," he replied, smiling, "and I have vanity enough to hope you will never have cause to consider it a very unhappy circumstance on your own account."

"I have great faith in my own works," said Louise; "and since I was able to achieve the mighty cure, I trust I shall have sufficient skill to prevent a relapse."

The company was now beginning to disperse, and our friends from Beechwood were among the first to quit a scene, offering more of grandeur than of pleasure, and less of pleasure than of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness.

But ere we take leave of the principal actors in this ostentatious scene, we will inform our readers, that before the first anniversary of the day on which they were united, the Duke and Duchess of Belltown were separated.

Unattached to each other by any ties save those of ambition and vanity, disgust succeeded the accomplishment of these views. As soon as the sensation caused by the marriage had subsided, and people and newspapers ceased to talk of it, the duke had leisure to discover that his wife was a vain coquette; and she, having obtained the title which was the object of her ambition, had nothing more to desire; she was incapable of affection, and very soon heartily hated her hus-

band, who treated her with the utmost neglect and indifference, which rapidly degenerated into contempt and dislike.

The consequence was a final separation; and thus terminated the matrimonial career of these illustrious personages.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE Count de Léal had watched, with anxious expectation, for letters from the continent, which at length arrived; and with trembling eagerness he opened a packet that Lord Bransby put into his hand, from his father.

The contents were much more favourable than he had dared to anticipate; not only did the marquis pardon his hasty marriage, but gave him hopes of obtaining a permanent and honourable post at the court of Vienna; concluding by wishing him to leave England for Paris, as soon as he could make arrangements to that effect. This welcome letter was accompanied with an elegant set of pearls, as a present for the young countess, whose delight at the kindness of her new father was unbounded.

The marquis was, in fact, perfectly satisfied with the alliance his son had entered into, as the fortune about to be settled on Lavinia, though it might be looked upon as inconsiderable in England, would not be so in Germany, where, in all probability, the count would hereafter reside.

The grateful Lavinia, however, would not consent to quit the kingdom, perhaps never to return, without bidding adieu to the friends whose generosity had been the means of securing the hap-

piness of herself and her beloved husband ; and, ever anxious to gratify her slightest wish, the count took her to Aberdeen, where they remained several days with the two old ladies, who parted from them at last with tears of unfeigned regret.

It was a painful task for the affectionate heart of the count to bid farewell to those with whom he had passed so many happy years. With them were associated his earliest thoughts, his earliest feelings ; he had scarcely known any other father than Lord Bransby ; and to return to his own family was, to him, as going among strangers.

The parting adieus were at length made, and the count and countess proceeded to London, where they were met by Captain Arlington.

Lavinia once more wrote to Lady Arlington, who consented, with some repugnance, to see her ; and she went, accompanied by her husband and brother.

The meeting was a very cold one. Lady Arlington merely wished her happy, and Marian scarcely spoke. Indeed she with difficulty restrained herself from indulging in bitter invectives against her sister, on account of the favour she had met with from her aunts, which Marian considered ought to have been reserved exclusively for herself ; but the presence of the gentlemen, in some measure, prevented her from indulging the wrath, which was visible in her countenance, although she dared not allow it to break forth.

This visit of ceremony over, they proceeded, accompanied by the captain, to Brighton, from whence they crossed the channel, and, having

seen them safely landed at Dieppe, we there take our leave of them.

Captain Arlington returned to town, where he remained till the end of October, at which time the Minerva again left the shores of England. With one sigh to the land of his birth, and another to Louise, the gallant Captain watched the receding shore till it vanished beneath the horizon, and he was once more surrounded by the broad ocean. Nor was Sellwood less distressed, as he stood silent and thoughtful on the deck. To increase the dejection of our two friends, a homeward bound vessel passing near, struck up the well-known air, "Home, sweet home!" and, contrasting their own feelings on a similar occasion with those they now experienced, they both retired in silence to their cabins.

Early in the spring, Louise Bransby gave her hand to Sir Charles Freemantle. The ceremony was performed at St. George's, Hanover-square; and, as the newspapers announced, the happy couple set off immediately for Myrtlewood, where we wish them all imaginable felicity; and, indeed, no two persons ever enjoyed a brighter prospect of it, since the happiness of each consists in giving pleasure to the other.

We have now brought our story to a happy conclusion — happy for all parties. First, for the characters therein concerned; secondly, for ourselves — and thirdly, for the reader, who, we fear, was wearied long ago; but with whom, as we have done our best endeavour to amuse him, we humbly and sincerely hope we part *friends*.

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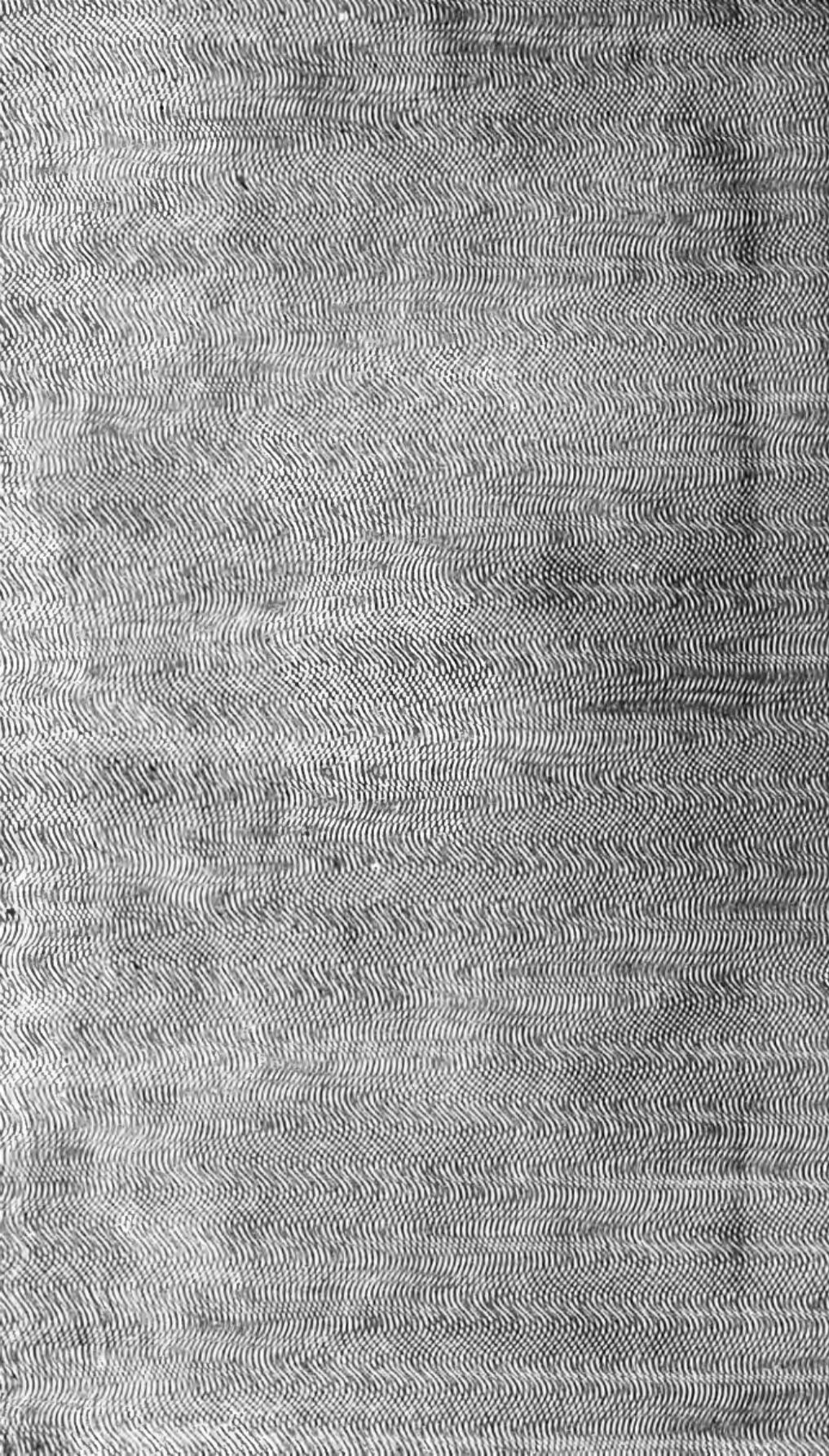
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